

HELIANTHUS



OUIDA



*First Edition*









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HELIANTHUS



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TORONTO

# HELIANTHUS

A NOVEL

BY

OUIDA

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

THE unfinished novel contained in the following pages is the last work of the gifted writer who was so widely known during her lifetime under the *nom de plume* of 'Ouida.' Illness and other causes retarded her in writing the story, which as a matter of fact was planned and outlined some years ago, and at her death it was found to be still incomplete. Fortunately, however, the first twenty-nine chapters had been set up in type as they were written; and as these chapters would clearly have constituted by far the larger portion of the completed book, it has been judged best to publish them, without alteration or addition, exactly in the form in which they were left by their author after having been revised by her in proof.

February 1908.





## CHAPTER I

THE sun was setting over the sea of the west, and its glow shone on the beautiful and classic city of Helios, the capital of the ancient land of Helianthus.

In the long and stately streets, clouds of dust were golden with the sad reflection of an unseen glory which is, at such an hour, all that many thousands of the dwellers in cities enjoy of the beauty of evening. The thoroughfares of the capital were full of people, and down the central street of all, so famous in history, a cavalcade was passing, a military feast for the eyes of a population which was not allowed many other pleasures. On either side of the street, which had been in great part widened, altered, modernised, made monotonous and correct, white marble was the chief architectural feature, and great white palaces towered towards the clear sky, which was blue, deeply blue, like the bells of the wild hyacinth. Striped awnings, scarlet and white, the national colours, stretched over the balconies ; there were flags drooping from gilded flagstaffs in most of the windows, from most of the doorways ; the flowers which had been cast down from above on to the pavement were already trodden into the dust, and there was

a curious odour of natural and artificial perfumes, of burnt powder, of trampled roses, of hot flesh, equine and human, steaming from the heat of the past day. Porphyry pillars, galleries of gilded metal, of pierced woodwork or of bronze arabesques, sculptured porticoes, painted shrines, plate-glass shop-fronts, hanging tapestries, frescoed frontages, shone in the amber luminance of the early evening. The dull-coloured clothing of a metropolitan crowd was largely broken up by the deep yellows, the red purples, the light blues, the dark crimsons, of the costumes of the country, and of the seafaring, peoples, and by the uniforms of the soldiery lining the edges of the pavements ; great bursts of martial music enlivened the air ; the brilliancy of sunset lent to the scene a gaiety not its own.

Despite the passing of two thousand years the capital of Helianthus was still a beautiful and classic city, throned on its eternal hills, with the semicircle of its shore washed by the Mare Magnum, and the mountains on the opposite side of the bay soaring to the clouds, and often capped by snow until the month of May. Modernity, the brutal and blundering Cyclops who misconceives himself to be a fruitful and beneficent deity, had struck his stupid blows at its temples, its domes, its towers, its palaces, had strewn its soil with shattered marbles, had felled its sacred laurel groves, had sullied or silenced its falling or rushing waters, had befouled with smoke its white marble colonnades, its towering palm plumes, its odorous gardens. Modernity had driven his steam-roller over the narcissus, the hyacinth, the cheiranthus ; and steam pistons throbbed where the doves of

Aphrodite had nested. But the city was still noble through the past, and unspeakably fair through those portions of unviolated heritage which it retained ; and its domes and minarets and bell-towers still shone in the light of the sun or the moon against the deep green of its cypress and cedar groves.

Many of its streets were still untouched ; its women still carried their bronze jars to its fountains ; its avenues of planes, and tulip-trees, and magnolias, were not all destroyed, though defiled by the shrieking tramway engines, the stinking automobiles, and though their boughs were often cruelly hacked and cut away to leave free passage for these modern gods, the electric wire and the petrol car. Ever and again, some porphyry basin whose waters gleamed beneath the great green leafage of sycamores ; some colossal figure of hero or of deity ; some silent stately arcade, with the sea glistening beyond its arches ; some sun-browned, mighty, crenelated wall ; some vast palace with ogive windows, and gratings elaborately wrought, and bronze doors in basso-relievo, and deep overhanging roofs, and machicolated towers ; these would recall all that Helios had been in ages when its white oxen were sacrificed to gods who are now remembered only in the nomenclature of the constellations of the sky, and its poets, who are still quoted by mankind, were crowned with the wild olive and the laurel in its holy places. With furious haste whole quarters had been torn down and swept aside and replaced by the mindless, ignoble, and monotonous constructions of the present time ; but other quarters still remained where the native population thronged together, gay in their poverty and mirthful in their rags, although hunger lay

down with them at night and arose with them in the morning, continual companion of their working hours. For a brief space on this festal day they ceased from labour, and tried to forget their starvation in the sight of their rulers and the soldiery of this imperial and military spectacle.

The King had already passed, with his beloved friend and nephew, one of those friends to be kissed on both cheeks and watched with hand on hilt. It was for the Emperor Julius that the military display on the Field of Ares had been made that day, and the Emperor Julius had said many sweet and gracious things about it: what he had thought was another matter, which concerned no one.

After the King, there had passed the Crown Prince, with his cousin, the young son of the great Julius, receiving the conventional cheers which are given to those who are powerful but not beloved. Then had followed a squadron of White Cuirassiers, a dazzling regiment; some companies of the Rhætian Mountaineers, a popular corps, with the feathers of the wild turkey in their hats; some squadrons of light cavalry on weedy and weary horses, not well-groomed and still less well-fed, the small and slender horses of the treeless plains of the south-east; and some field-batteries not exceedingly smart in appearance nor exact in movement, of which the gun-carriages lumbered along, too heavy for their weakly teams, whilst the metal of cannon and of caisson was dusty and dull. After these tramped some companies of infantry, very young soldiers, thin, and small of stature, who wore ill-fitting uniforms and were footsore and fatigued. No one cheered these.

Suddenly there was a movement of reviving interest; the ladies who had risen to leave the balconies returned, and reseated themselves; the people pushed each other forward, and scrambled to get out of the centre of the roadway, the guards thrusting back some scores roughly and needlessly. A half-squadron of Hussars came in sight, trotting briskly with drawn swords; behind them was an open carriage with four horses and postillions in the royal liveries, azure and silver. In the carriage was a young man in uniform, who carried his hussar's shako on his knee, and nodded familiarly with a tired smile to the multitudes who cheered him. He did not look up to the balconies and windows of the palaces, although their occupants cast roses and lilies down as he passed; he looked at the populace crowding the roadway.

He came and went in a cloud of sun-gilt dust, a vehement and ardent roar of voices greeting him on his way; ladies above waved their handkerchiefs and kissed the flowers they threw; the people below pushed and hurt each other in their efforts to get nearer to him; his carriage swept by in a storm of applause and loud cries of 'Elim! Elim! Elim! Long live Prince Elim!'

'There goes one who is at heart with us,' said a journalist of the city to a friend as they stood together in the crowd.

'No,' said the friend, who was wiser. 'He is with no one. He sees too clearly to find satisfaction in modern politics. We cannot content him any more than his own people do.'

The young prince passing at that moment recognised the two speakers as writers on the Republican

Press of Helios, and made them a friendly gesture of his hand.

His father's police-spies, mingling with the throng as mere citizens or operatives, saw the gesture and noted it.

His carriage passed on, the horses fretting and fuming at the pressure of the populace against their flanks.

The people cried again: 'Elim! Elim! Elim! Long life to Elim!'

He bowed to the crowds with a smile which was neither glad nor gay. He was thinking: 'They would come out in the same numbers to see the procession of a travelling menagerie; and if there were a blue lion or a green tiger to be seen they would cheer as warmly.'

He regretted that the crowds did come out, did cheer. It dwarfed human nature in his eyes; it made him ashamed of his own countrymen. So, if the statue of a god could think, would it feel towards its worshippers, whether it were named Zeus, Buddha, Christ, or Jehovah.

To the mind of the thinker there is no spectacle more painful, more provocative of wonder and of sadness, than the sight of the multitudes of a capital city standing for hours in sun, or rain, or snow, elbowing each other for a foremost place, breaking down tree-tops, stone copings, marble pedestals, bruising the bosoms of women and crushing the limbs of children, in order to see a royal procession pass by along familiar roadways. And this young prince was a thinker, a philosophic thinker, although having been born in the purple he had no right to be so. For the first duty of a prince is never to allow his

mind to stray outside the ring-fence of received and conventional opinion ; he must never question the superiority of his own order any more than the serving-priest of Christian churches must question the divinity of the Eucharist. If you do not believe in yourself, who will believe in you ?

The young prince now passing between the two lines of cheering people did not believe in himself, nor in his order, nor in his family, nor in any superiority of his or theirs. The enthusiasm of the crowds left him cold, for he rightly regarded such enthusiasm as too similar to the blind worship of trees and stones and carven woods by barbaric races, to be worth anything in the estimation of a reasonable being. It was fetish-worship : nothing else. That he himself was the fetish at the moment could not make the superstition any more worthy in his sight.

Three thousand years earlier the people of Egypt had thus clamoured in praise of their Pharaohs. Where was the progress of the human race ? Why must humanity always have a fetish of some sort ? Why ? It would perplex the wisest philosopher to say. Bisons and buffaloes in a natural state of existence elect a monarch, we are told ; but they are said to take the strongest, greatest, finest of the herd. Men do not do this ; they cannot do it ; for a civilised man, being a complicated creature, is apt to lack in one thing in proportion to what he possesses in another. If the successful fighter be selected by them, as by the bison or buffalo, they get a Wellington who becomes a failure in politics ; or if they take the man of genius, they get a Lamartine or a Disraeli ; or even if they obtain a Napoleon, power goes to their Napoleon's head and all is red ruin. So, in fear of

the unusual, they cling to the ordinary conventional hereditary person, and endow him with imaginary qualities, and hedge him about with symbols, and functions, and office-holders, and make-belief of all kinds. The bison and buffalo would not be satisfied with this ; but man is, or at least the majority of men are.

‘Is that one of the King’s sons?’ asked a foreigner speaking ill the language of the country.

The artisan to whom he spoke understood the question, despite the ugly accent of the stranger.

‘Who are you, that you do not know Elim?’ he replied.

‘Elim?’ repeated the foreigner, not comprehending.

‘Prince Elim,’ repeated the man. ‘Our Elim.’

‘The Duke of Othyris,’ added another working-man.

‘Oh, to be sure,’ said the stranger, ‘the Heir Presumptive, is he not?’

‘The most popular person in the country,’ said an idler, who had a carnation between his teeth.

‘He seems very popular indeed,’ said the foreigner, with interrogation in his tone.

‘All the family are,’ said the idler with the carnation drily ; then catching from under the white cap of one who was dressed like a cook from a restaurant a sharp glance, which seemed to him that of a spy in disguise, he raised his hat and said reverently, ‘Christ have them all in His keeping.’

The foreigner was touched. ‘And they say these people are malcontents and revolutionaries!’ he murmured to a companion, as he stooped to pick up a rose which had been thrown from a window to the



carriage of the Duke of Othyris, and had missed its goal.

‘The malcontents have muzzles on,’ said his friend. ‘Sixteen hundred men were clapped in prison before the Emperor’s arrival, and some thousands are confined to their own houses.’

‘But it is a constitutional country!’ protested the traveller from overseas.

‘Oh yes,’ answered the other, ‘on paper and in theory!’

‘Circulate, circulate, circulate!’ said the gendarmes, imitating their brethren of the larger capitals of Europe, and enforcing their order with thrusts from their elbows, or from the pommels of their sabres, into the ribs or the chests of the people.

The glow from the western sky died down, the shadows lengthened and crept upward to the zinc roofs; the balconies were emptied, the electric light flashed suddenly down the whole street, and made the faces of the multitude look hard, jaded, pallid, dejected; a dull silence fell on the populace, a silence in which the rumbling of the tram-cars, readmitted to movement after half-a-day’s exclusion, sounded like a caricature of the artillery which had passed down there twenty minutes before. The tired children cried, the hustled women sighed, the men who had been knocked about by fists and sabres went sullenly homeward, the wounded were carried into hospital; the festivities were over.

From the open windows of the palaces and hotels arose a steam and scent of good things to eat and good wines to drink, and spread itself through all the length of the street, mingling with, and overpowering, the odours of flowers, and powder, and hot human

and equine flesh. It made many of the poorer sight-seers in the crowd feel hungry, more hungry than ever ; and it made the little tired children cry louder to go home.

‘The Romans gave bread as well as the Circus,’ thought Elim, Duke of Othyris, as his carriage turned in at his palace gates. ‘We are more economical. We only give the Circus, and even that we run for our own use.’

The sound of cheering in the distance rolled down the soft air and sounded like repeated firing.

What were they cheering now ? Who ? Why ? At that instant the crowd gathered before his own residence in the Square of the Dioscuri was cheering himself ; but that made the ovation seem no wiser to him.

What was that clamour worth ?

Ten minutes earlier they had cheered his father and his imperial cousin. They had cheered equally the great artillery guns, and the sweating battery horses, although they knew well enough that if they themselves offended authority, the guns would belch red death on to them, and the horses be driven, under the slashing whip cord, over their fallen bodies.

‘O fools ! O fools !’ he said to himself, as he who pities humanity is always driven in sorrow, or in anger, or in both, to say it. *Panem et Circenses !* It is always the old story. Cæsar may use up their bodies on his battlefields, and grind their souls to dust under his tyrannies, if he give them the arena—even without the bread. So long as he pleases their fancies, or dazzles their eyes, they will cheer him ; and they are pleased by so little, and dazzled by such tawdry

tinsel ! Why did the people flock to see this very paltry pageant ? Why did not the men go about their work or their business, and the women shut their windows ? No one could force them to turn out in their thousands, and waste a whole day ; and if they were not there to line the streets, and be hustled by the police, Cæsar might arrive at a juster view of his own actual values and proportions. There is much they cannot do ; but some things they might do ; and to stay indoors on a day like this is one of them.

The traveller from a distant continent, which is called a new country, probably because it was old when Atlantis was submerged, went to dine at a restaurant which was modelled on the eating-places of that great Guthonic empire ruled by the Emperor Julius ; the cooks were Guthonic, the waiters were Guthonic, even the wines, which were Helianthine, were labelled by Guthonic names. The annexing of a nation usually begins with its bills of fare.

The stranger from overseas was curious, and questioned the attendant who brought him his coffee and cognac.

‘What was it,’ he asked, ‘that happened on the Field of Ares to-day, and made the public give such an enthusiastic reception to the King’s second son ?’

‘There was an unfortunate incident during the march past, sir,’ replied the man, seeing that the amount of money left for him on the salver was generous. ‘I do not know details. Some country folks got across the line of the *défilé* ; the Duke stopped his squadrons and occupied himself with the safety of the people and their beasts ; the cavalry division was in consequence some minutes late ; it made a break in

the march past ; it is said His Majesty was displeased at the breach of discipline.'

'Perhaps he is jealous of his son's greater popularity?'

'The King is very popular, sir,' said the waiter with discretion.

'Is that so?' said the visitor, incredulous. 'The King is a very strict disciplinarian, they say?'

'He is considered so : yes, sir.'

'But would he have had his son see his subjects trampled to death before his eyes without an effort to save them?'

'I believe, sir, His Majesty does not think anything of so much importance as military exactitude ; and the persons who would have been run over were very low people—cowherds or swineherds, I believe.'

'I understand why the nation prefers his son to himself,' said the foreigner with a smile.

'Oh, sir, I never said that the Duke was preferred!'

'But he is so, my friend. What a difference there was in the cheering!'

The attendant took his fee off the salver and was discreetly silent.

'I guess he is a fine fellow, that Duke,' said the traveller, as he rose, took his cane and overcoat, and went out on to the broad white marble quay where the tamarisks and the magnolias showed the blue water between their trunks ; that blue water which has been the Mare Magnum of two thousand years of history.

The waiter saw him go out with relief ; this kind of conversation is dangerous in Helianthus, which is a free country.

The traveller might say what he chose, thought the man ; it was a serious thing to interrupt and delay a march past, merely because some common folks might have been injured. It was quite natural that King John should be very angry, and report said that King John when angry was as unpleasant to encounter as the wild boar which was the emblem of his royal house.

The waiter, having imbibed bourgeois and conventional opinion as he imbibed heel-taps, admired this characteristic. It seemed to him truly imperial.

For in this world there would be no tyrants if there were no toadies.

## CHAPTER II

THE people's favourite, on reaching his own residence, changed his uniform for plain clothes, drank some soda water, and took his way, as the Ave Maria rang over the city from a thousand churches, chapels, and bell-towers, to the palace in which his royal father dwelt, and which was known as the Soleia.

The Soleia was a group of castles, halls, and temples, which were built round the great central edifice of which the dome glistened with gilded Oriental tiles, and could be seen many miles off from either the mountains or the sea. It was a wondrous unison of many styles and ages, beginning with the Byzantine ; palace built on palace as beavers' dwellings cluster on each other. In one of these resided the Crown Prince and Princess of Helianthus. It was thither that Othyris was bent.

'Who knows,' he thought, 'what they may not have told her, and what fears are not agitating her good, kind, buckram-bound heart?'

He took a short path across the gardens of the Soleia to the portion of it occupied by his sister-in-law and his brother Theodoric, the heir to the throne.

The Crown Prince was the only scion of a first alliance contracted in early youth with a princess of a

small northern State now mediatised and merged in a great Power. His mother had died in the third year of her marriage, having reproduced in her son exactly her own character, grafted on to that of John of Gunderöde, whose shrewd talents, however, were not inherited ; for the Crown Prince was what would have been called in an ordinary mortal, stupid. He had the hopelessly unilluminated and incorrigible dulness which comes from a naturally narrow brain, budded on the platitudes of conventional education and manured by the heating phosphates of flattery. He had an implicit belief in his knowledge and judgment, and was completely satisfied as to his indispensable utility to his nation. In appearance he was a tall, well-built, spare, and very muscular man, red of hair and ruddy of skin, rigid and stiff in movement ; his forehead was low, his jaw was prominent ; he had little intelligence, little comprehension ; he had immense belief in himself, in his family, in his caste ; he was religious, chaste, absorbed in his duties ; to his soldiers he was brutal, but that, he considered, was at once their good and his own privilege. He had wedded a cousin-german, a princess of a neighbouring empire ; he had by her only two female children ; this was the greatest chagrin of his life. Excellent as his morality was, he could not suppress a sense of pleasurable hope whenever his wife took cold. Being a conscientious and religious person, he did not allow his mind to dwell on the contingencies which might arise out of a fatal illness ; but the sentiment of pleasurable expectation, whenever she coughed, was there.

The Crown Princess was by birth Guthonic, a cousin-german of the great Julius. She was a homely-looking woman of thirty-two years of age ;

she had a plain face, pale blue eyes, and a high colour ; she dressed with great simplicity on all except State occasions, and had a kindly and simple manner, which could, however, on occasion become cold and dignified though always bland.

She was sitting by an open glass door, knitting a stocking for a poor child ; she wore a gown of grey stuff with a white linen collar and cuffs ; she seemed to take pleasure in accentuating her own homeliness and want of grace and of colour. She had nothing to distinguish her from any good and homely housewife in the northern kingdom whence she came. Her brother-in-law loved her for her sincerity, simplicity, and goodness ; and she was attached to him by the law of contrast, and by her gratitude for his unwavering regard and loyalty to her. She looked troubled and anxious. The lady who was with her withdrew at a sign from her as her brother-in-law entered.

‘Oh, my dear Elim !’ she said as soon as her lady had withdrawn. ‘What is this I hear ? You caused a break in the march past ? Is it possible ? I have heard no details. Pray tell me all !’

He laughed irreverently.

‘Yes. I am guilty of that monstrous crime. Some peasants, Heaven knows how, got in the way of the *défilé* ; I had either to crush them or to stop my squadrons. Who could hesitate ?’

‘What a dreadful alternative !’ said the Crown Princess with agitation.

‘I see nothing very dreadful about it. It is one of those matters which only assume importance in the eyes of a military martinet. The difference in time was perhaps five minutes.’



‘But, as I understand it, you were leading the Light Cavalry Division?’

‘Yes.’

The Princess looked anxious. ‘It is a great military offence.’

He laughed.

‘If they cashier me, how happy I shall be! If they send me to a fortress I shall have time to translate Tibullus, which I have always wished to do.’

‘You are too flippant and reckless, Elim.’

‘I should have thought that you at least——’ he said, and paused, leaving the sentence unfinished.

‘You thought that I should approve your action, as the people do? Well, perhaps I do, in my heart. I think you acted naturally, mercifully, heroically. But being what you are, and where you were, it was foolhardy; and to—to my husband and to your father, it appears an outrageous offence.’

‘Because I offended the Deity of Discipline! Because I momentarily broke the order of the march past! *La belle affaire!* Why do they make me dress up in uniform? Why do they not leave me in peace in my painting-room? I abhor soldiering; I abhor militarism. I am a man; I am not a machine. They may break me. They will not bend me.’

‘I am sorry,’ said the Crown Princess, and her sad, plain, kind countenance was clouded.

‘Sorry that I did not sit still in my saddle like a figure of wood, and see men and women and cattle stamped and crushed under the rush of the regiments I commanded? My dear Gertrude, that is very unlike you.’

‘But it was not your affair. It was not the fitting moment for compassion.’

‘You say that very feebly, and I hear the voice of your husband speaking from your lips! Do not deny your own feelings, and repeat like a parrot, my dear sister; such cruelty is unworthy of you.’

‘But——’ said the Princess, and sighed, for she had been born and brought up in the rigidity of a military dominion, in the superstitions of a military caste. For a soldier to leave the ranks, for a commanding officer to interrupt a military display, seemed to her a violation of laws still more sacred than the laws of nature or the dictates of mercy. ‘But you caused a break in the march past, a pause in the review, a breach in continuity, unexplained, inexcusable. Theo says that the Emperor smiled! Imagine what your father must have felt when he saw that smile!’

‘Julius is our pedagogue and our War-lord, as we all know,’ said Othyris with irritation. ‘But I think we should not smart so easily under his smiles or his frowns.’

The Crown Princess sighed. She did not love Julius, who was her cousin both by marriage and by consanguinity, but she knew that Julius was an unknown quantity and potent factor in the future of Helianthus and of Europe. No flippancy or ridicule from Elim could alter that fact, or say what that future would become.

‘My dear Gertrude,’ said Othyris with some impatience, ‘let us leave the subject. I may have done what was wrong. At all events I did what my conscience suggested to me in a moment when there was no time for reflection. I imagine the herdsmen

think that I did right as they go through the meadows this evening.'

The Princess sighed.

'Yes ; oh yes, poor creatures ! But, my dear Elim, reflect ; if you commanded a division in an invading army you would be compelled to burn, to pillage, to destroy, to commit what in peace would be crimes, but in war become necessary and legitimate actions, even admirable actions, however much to be regretted. Well, a review is mimic war, and, like what it mimics, it cannot have place or pause for humanity.'

'I shall not be obliged to burn, to pillage, to destroy ; for I will never go out on any offensive campaign.'

'Oh, my dear ! You will have to go if you are ordered.'

'Not at all. I can let them blow me from a gun, or shut me up in a fortress.'

'Do not say such things, I entreat you !' said his sister-in-law with a shudder. She knew that any day the pleasure of Julius or of the financiers, or the fear of internal troubles, might force the Helianthine government into war with some neighbour, a war of attack of which no man living could foretell the issue.

'There are times when we must not listen to our hearts, nor even to our consciences,' she added timidly. 'There are times when duty requires us to be even cruel, to be even sinful, when to be what you call a machine is the sole supreme obligation upon us.'

'A shocking creed ! It may be stretched to excuse any crime.'

‘But to give way to every impulse may also lead to any crime?’

‘Not if the impulse be good, be impersonal. I know very well what you mean. It is the theory of all persons like your husband and like my father, who place machinery before men, who value appearances and are blind to facts, who think a button awry or a tape untied more terrible than any catastrophe to the populace.’

‘A valve is a small thing ; but on its opening or shutting correctly depends the safety of an express train or of an ocean steamer.’

‘Let us quit metaphors. They are unsatisfactory in argument. Tell me plainly, Gertrude, would you have had me gallop on at the head of my squadrons, and see people—our people, for whose wellbeing my family is responsible—crushed to pulp under my troopers’ chargers a few yards off me?’

His sister-in-law hesitated ; over her homely, melancholy features a wave of colour rose and receded.

‘I am reluctant to say it ; but I think—yes,—I do think at that moment you were not your own master to move and to act. You were only an officer of the King, entrusted with a high command.’

He turned away from the sofa on which she sat, and paced the room with irritation. In the voice of this good woman whom he loved and respected he hated to hear the conventional gospel which had been dinned into his ears ever since his long curls had been cut off, on the day after his sixth birthday, and he had been taken away from his toys and his nurses, his dogs and his guinea-pigs, and given over into the charge of a civil governor and a military tutor.

‘What a monstrous theory for a gentle and kind woman like you to hold!’ he cried.

She answered with a sigh :

‘There are times, my dear, when a man, above all a prince, above all a soldier, does not belong to himself at all, but entirely to his duties, entirely to the sovereign, to the State, to the army.’

He laughed a brief strident laugh which it hurt her to hear.

‘Unhappy man, and thrice unhappy prince! A soldier I am not,’ he added : ‘they dress me up as one ; they do not make me one. How well I know it, Gertrude, that religion of formula, that doctrine of self-abasement, that negation of manhood, that lifting up on high of an idol more cruel than the serpent of brass, and more ludicrous than any black wooden eyeless Madonna ! It has been preached to me for over a score of years, and always in vain. My mind rejects it ; my sense despises it ; my conscience repulses it. It may take effect on others. It takes none on me. I am a wild goat amongst sheared sheep. You know it.’

The Crown Princess sighed.

She was a good woman ; warm of heart, conscientious in self-judgment, liberal of hand ; but, good woman though she was, habit and caste had encrusted her mind, as an object is encrusted in a petrifying spring.

She loved Elim despite his heresies, and she owed him much ; the debt of a solitary woman for sympathy which can never be forgotten. He had been only a boy when she had come to the Court of Helianthus, the victim of a conventional union, of a political alliance ; a shy, sad, and serious young

woman, conscious of her want of beauty and her lack of charm, reserved by nature and timid from habitual restraint. The kindness and sweetness of the Queen, and the good nature and good-will of Elim, had been her consolation and support in what she had felt to be a painful exile, an almost friendless solitude. The beautiful Queen was dead ; but her memory remained, as her life had been, a tie between her son and the northern Princess.

‘Do I worry you?’ he said with compunction. ‘You pay the penalty, my poor sister, of being the only person in all the family who invites confidence. Let us forget this little incident, and let us be glad that the peasants and their lambs and milch-cows got away with unbroken bones. How are H  l  ne and Olga ? May I see them ?’

‘They are at their studies, we must not disturb them,’ said the mother of the little girls. ‘You may pity me too, Elim. The pressure of the iron cylinder rolls over my children also, and pushes them away from me. But it must be so. It is necessary. It is inevitable. It is in interests which rank higher than my pleasure or my affection.’

‘Poor victim of Juggernaut !’ said Othyris with a smile which was at once indulgent and ironical. ‘What a beautiful evening ! Let us go for ten minutes into the gardens and forget our harness.’

‘Is there time ?’ she said anxiously, looking at the little crystal ball of her watch ; her entire existence was regulated by clock-work. ‘I fear there is not time.’

‘Oh yes ; time at least for a little stroll,’ said Othyris as he went out on to the terrace of rose-granite, with balustrades of porphyry columns,

which stretched before the windows. Beneath its wide hemicycle of stairs, bordered by palms and yuccas, stretched the flowers, the lawns, the ponds, and statues, and fountains, of the southern side of the royal gardens ; beyond these were masses of varied foliage of ornamental trees ; and still beyond these again, the shimmering silver of the sea, calm and heaving gently underneath the violet sky in which a young moon had risen. The city might have been a thousand miles away for any suggestion that there was of it, or any murmur of its restless crowds. On a life-sized group of Aphrodite mourning the dead Adonis, the clear soft light of the early summer evening was shining ; the statue was of the period which is called debased Greek art, but it was very beautiful despite its epoch.

‘How like you are to the Adonis, Elim !’ said the Princess as they passed the group.

‘So my dear mother used to say. So my flatterers still say.’

‘I never flatter you, Elim.’

‘Dear, you have the only flattery which is really sweet and wholesome, which is true flower-made honey that does not cloy : a too indulgent affection. Would to Heaven I were of marble like the Adonis, or of petrified wood like your beloved husband !’

They went down the steps of one of the terraces and walked on by an avenue of tulip-trees ; at its end was a small classic temple looking out on to the western sea, on which the after-glow of a springtide day was still roseate.

‘How we waste our time, how we lose our summers !’ said Othyris as he gazed across the sea, so warm and bright in the light of the early eve. ‘We

have only just come in from the dust of the Field of Ares, and we must go and sit behind gold plate with the evening light shut out that electric fuses may burn.'

The Princess did not contradict him. How happy she would have been walking with her two little girls along a country lane, talking with them of field flowers and hedge birds, and seeing the slow and pensive twilight of her northern home steal softly over furrow and hamlet and sheepfold !

On the silver field of the serene water of the gulf there was a vessel, dark in the luminous blue of the early night. It was a fishing-vessel, and on a wooden gallery in its bow a man was standing, whilst other boatmen rowed. In his raised hand was a long spear. The barque was moving swiftly, turning now to leeward now to windward.

'They are chasing a sword-fish,' said Othyris. 'We cannot see the fish, but they can. To think that this chase has gone on for twenty centuries and more, in precisely the same manner in these same waters !'

The vessel glided out of the light into the shadow, and the figure of the spear-thrower was lost in the deeper blue of the shade ; there only remained visible the two starboard oars dipping into and flashing with the phosphorescent water.

'They do not often succeed in taking him,' said Othyris. 'He is difficult to see even by day, kind nature made him so blue. But the kindness of nature is generally thwarted by the ingenuity of man, by the devilry of mankind.'

'Poor Xiphias !' he added : 'he is a soldier too in his way, but he fights with the weapon which



nature gave him, and he attacks bigger creatures than himself. He is a chivalrous knight compared to the war-makers of our time. I wish the fishermen would leave him alone. Yet those men yonder are to be excused. They are hungry, they have children as hungry at home. But what do you say to our sister Ottoline, who goes out with them for the sheer pleasure of seeing the agonies of the poor gallant Xiphias? She has even learnt to throw the harpoon herself!

‘There is nothing to excuse it. For, in her choice, there is neither ignorance nor compulsion,’ said the Princess sadly, and looked at her watch by the light of the moon. ‘I fear I must go in, my dear; there will be only twenty minutes left for me to put on my war-paint.’

‘I have a mind to stay here,’ said Othyris gazing wistfully at the sea. ‘What would happen if I failed to appear?’

‘For goodness’ sake do not have such freaks of fancy,’ said his sister-in-law in anxiety. ‘You would see the sun rise from the barred window of some fortress.’

‘Because I did not show at a banquet? What an idea!’

‘But the Emperor is our guest, our cousin, our ally!’

‘Our *suzerain*,’ said Othyris bitterly.

‘Do not say such things, dear Elim,’ murmured his sister-in-law. ‘Here statues have ears, and trees have tongues. Come, dear; do come, to please me.’

Othyris looked with regret to the beauty of the early night, to the phosphorescent sea, the violet sky, the dark outline of the fishing-barque, the

marble balustrades and statues pale and cool in the shadow, then reluctantly accompanied her back towards the palace by the avenue of tulip-trees.

‘If I were only the man with the lance on the boat,’ he said, ‘but without the penal obligation of slaying the sword-fish!’

‘And do you not think the man with the lance says or thinks, “If I were only that great Prince yonder amongst his roses”?’

‘Perhaps he does, poor ignorant! He does not know that the Prince has not a moment to enjoy the scent of the roses!’

‘But, Elim,’ said his sister-in-law with that timidity which always characterised her utterance of any opinion of her own, ‘do you not think that, as you fill a position which you cannot change, and as you may possibly be called to fill one still more trying and arduous, it would be wiser, merely from a common-sense point of view, to cease to struggle against what you cannot possibly alter?—neither you nor any one who lives.’

He did not reply. His thoughts went farther than he chose to say even to this good and loyal woman.

‘Acquiescence is the hardest of all duties to any one of your temperament,’ she added. ‘But if a duty be not hard what merit is there in accepting its yoke?’

‘I do not see either duty or merit in this instance!’

‘My dear Elim!——’

‘I do not.’

‘Then where——?’

‘Where shall I look for them? Is that what you would say? What a pity I cannot find them

as Theo does in regulation belts and regimental buttons !’

‘Theo is conscientious,’ said Theo’s wife with reproach.

‘All disagreeable people are !’ said Othyris with a little laugh.

‘I wish you would not laugh at Theo,’ said Theo’s wife uneasily, with a little red spot in each thin cheek.

‘*Il s’y prête !*’ said Othyris with careless waywardness.

‘Oh, my dear Elim, hush !’ said Theo’s wife in distress. ‘We must really go indoors,’ she said nervously. ‘It is a pity, yes ; like you I should willingly spend the evening here. But one has no right to expect to be idle.’

‘We are worse than idle ; we are actively mischievous. Can there be a greater waste of time or a more unpleasant form of ennui than a dinner of sixteen courses for persons already over-fed ?’

She did not reply, but hurried back towards the terrace ; such remarks almost seemed to her to suggest softening of the brain ; to her a great dinner was a function, like a church ceremony, or the opening of a new session, or a royal baptism.

Othyris left the Soleia, as he had come there, by a private gate which opened on a side street ; he was unattended, and hoped to reach his own palace unrecognised. But when he had passed through the two other small streets lying between the Soleia and his own residence he was seen by some of the people standing about the principal road leading to the Square of the Dioscuri, and a cheer was raised ; his name was spoken ; others joined in the cheering ; soon the applause grew deafening ; men, women, and

children ran thither from all parts, and the rough rejoicings rose tumultuous like the cawing from a rookery.

He was provoked with himself for his forgetfulness of the probability of such a demonstration. There was nothing which he more greatly disliked, and nothing which more incensed the King and his elder brother. It was now impossible to avoid the people; they had recognised him. He saluted the populace courteously, but signed to them to disperse. In the noise from their lungs no speech of his could be heard. He was vexed with himself for his own heedlessness in coming on foot from the gardens to his own house. He knew how intensely these evidences of his own popularity offended and irritated his father and his brothers; that advantage was taken of them by those jealous of him; that exaggeration was used by the socialistic and subversive journals concerning them.

He had acted on an impulse of humanity that day on the Field of Ares, and he would have done the same thing if he had acted on reflection; but he knew that in the eyes of his family his action could only seem like a studied attitude to please the people, a politic bid for public favour. All his actions took that complexion in their sight.

The numbers in the Square increased with every second; the municipal police, alarmed at a demonstration which they might have, but had not, foreseen, endeavoured to push their way towards him; he himself was annoyed, for if anything would have made him an enemy to the populace, it would have been their methods of showing their enthusiasm for himself.

He motioned aside the guards when they at last succeeded in reaching him ; communal guards with their revolvers in their hands ready to use them and happy to do so.

‘Put up your arms,’ he said sharply. ‘There is no occasion for them.’

The multitude heard and cheered more lustily, their voices pealing over the wide space, the shrill outcries of the women sounding like the sound of fifes, the chest notes of the stronger men like the roll of drums.

Fact had already become legend, and the versions of his recent action on the Field of Ares were rapidly swelling into a Heraklean fable.

‘Elim ! Elim ! Long life and Heaven’s blessing to Elim, the friend of the people !’ they cried in their rhythmical roar.

By signs to the crowd, and with a smile, he made a path for himself towards his residence, the guards closing in behind him, forbidden by him to do more. Sundry of his gentlemen and some of the officers of his division came out to meet him, elbowing their way to release him.

The electric light was now lit and illumined the palms, the statues, the parterres of flowers, the great fountains, the agitated, many-coloured, dense throng of the people.

‘Speak to us ! speak to us !’ they shouted. ‘Speak to us, Elim !’

He turned round before his own gates, and again raised his hat to them.

‘Not now, my friends,’ he said. ‘Thanks for your good-will ; and good-night to you.’

The people murmured loudly and many swore

in their wrath ; but the great bronze gates closed behind him, and they could only shout, and wave their caps, and trample on one another in the cold, clear light shining on the steel tubes of the guards' revolvers. One by one, little by little, they tired of waiting, and dropped away into the streets leading from the Square ; a few hundred remained to see their idol pass in his carriage to the Soleia, to the banquet given there for the Emperor of the Guthones.

## CHAPTER III

MEANWHILE Elim's father, John, King of Helianthus, sat in his study and thought over the matter with extreme offence and irritation. He was a short, stout, well-made man of nearly sixty years of age; he had a plain face, a dark skin, bristling iron-grey hair, and a high narrow forehead with thick, straight eyebrows. Under those straight, dark brows his eyes looked out like two ever-vigilant vedettes; they were small grey eyes, pale in colour, half-hidden by heavy lids; the iris was touched by the inflamed thread-like veins of the cornea; but they were eyes which left in the minds of those at whom they looked sharply an indescribable impression of discomfort; they made the most simple and sincere of persons feel embarrassed with an uneasy sense of being detected and read through unpleasantly. For the rest he was without distinction of any kind; he looked a gentleman, but of the wealthy bourgeois type; there was nothing of the patrician in him except his fine hands and slender wrists; he was inclined to corpulence, and only overcame that royal defect by active habits and his devotion to the exercise of sport; he smoked almost constantly, indoors and out, for he knew the value of tobacco to save speech. He was a person of few words; words

compromise oneself, silence embarrasses others—he never compromised himself, but he frequently embarrassed others.

He ate largely, as most rulers of men do ; and he drank with great moderation, at such times, at least, as he was not in wrath ; then he drank brandy copiously. After his mid-day meal he slept for an hour ; then he transacted business and conversed with the Ministers of the moment ; then he went out riding or driving, usually driving himself, with fine young thorough-bred horses, whose nerves, under their shining over-groomed skin, trembled when they saw him approach and take up the ribbons.

He was an incongruous figure in the classic palaces, the grand, silent, romantic gardens, the majestic galleries, the tapestried corridors of his many residences in Helianthus ; as incongruous as a British sentry on duty on a palm terrace of Benares. But he did not see it ; or rather, the contrast, so far as he perceived it, seemed to him entirely to his own advantage.

Outside his apartments, avenues of *cratægus* and *paulownia*, masses of roses and *datura*, fountains shining through the glorious gloom of secular cedars, wide lawns sloping down from sculptured marble staircases, deep pools sleeping under water-lilies, the golden and silver armour of fish glancing under the arum and *nenuphar* leaves where sunrays touched the water, statues which had been there in the same places since first called into being by classic sculptors—all offered their enchantment to his sight. But he never looked at them, nor walked amidst them ; the electric bells, the telephone tubes, the innumerable



scientific devices and appliances disfiguring the frescoed wall at the back of his writing-table, were far more interesting in his sight.

John of Gunderöde was not a man of great abilities ; but he was a great egotist, which is a form of talent, and he was exceedingly shrewd in all questions which regarded his own advantage. As his own advantage was often identical with that of his kingdom, he was considered a patriotic monarch ; but when his own advantage clashed with that of his kingdom, the latter went to the wall, as in loyalty a kingdom is bound to do. He had a sincere belief in his own utility to the country : he was perfectly honest in his conviction that his grip held it together, that he was the keystone of its arch, the mortar of its bastions. He took himself very seriously. He believed in himself, which is the surest mode of making others believe in you. Born in a private station, he would have made an admirable artillery or infantry officer, or, perhaps, a still better merchant or stockbroker ; that he impressed many persons as being a potential Cæsar was due entirely to his own belief in his Cæsarism. Called to be the constitutional sovereign of a liberty-loving and republican nation, he had made himself an autocrat and the nation a servant. The alteration had been gradual, and not violent, for he was a man who could control his desires in his own interests. This power of self-restraint was the conspicuous quality of his race.

Nothing, now, would have given him greater pleasure than to have had his son put under arrest immediately on his return from the Field of Ares ; nothing would have been more just or correct as he

viewed justice and correction. But he hesitated to carry out his views : he knew that his son was popular, and that the populace of Helios might rise in his defence.

So far as the King had nerves to suffer from, he was nervous during any visit of the War-lord of the Guthones. He was constantly apprehensive of something which might happen to disgrace his army or his police in his guest's sight. This action of his second son was such a heinous breach of military etiquette as it would have been impossible ever to have seen on the sandy plains where the hosts of Julius manœuvred. It was natural that all the sullen, savage rage of which his reserved temper was capable, growled within him like a muzzled mastiff's. If he had followed his impulses, and his sense of duty, Elim would have had short shrift.

To him the action of Othyris was the most contemptible melodrama, as well as the most intolerable breach of discipline. That break of a few minutes in the march past, of which Elim thought so lightly, was to him a direct offence against military etiquette and law. No punishment would have seemed to him too severe for it, viewed from a military standpoint. But that the abominable act had pleased the people he was aware ; the rapturous cheering with which his son had been greeted in the streets had told him that ; and he doubted whether public opinion, either in the country or outside it, would go with him in heavy chastisement of an infraction of discipline which had as its excuse the sentimental plea of humanity.

The King was a strong man and in nothing stronger than in his capability of taking into account

the weight in public opinion of feelings which he himself despised as absurd and hysterical vapours.

With him, in this distressing hour, were the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, the War Minister, and the Prefect of the Palace.

The theories and the temper of the first of these officials, General Lipsahl, made him abhor such an action as that of Othyris on the Field of Ares. It was in his sight a treason to the flag, to the King, to the dignity of the military calling. Who could excuse it? No one who had any sense of duty. At the same time, although the mind of Lipsahl was like an armoured waggon, closed by iron shutters to projectiles as to daylight, yet Kantakuzene, the Prime Minister, had seen him for ten minutes, secretly, and had said to him :

‘For God’s sake remember this thing is popular ; restrain the King from public blame of it.’

This was the evil which ensued from Helianthus being nominally at least a constitutional State ; monarch and Ministers had still sometimes to consider popular feeling.

The ideal of Lipsahl was the adjacent little kingdom of Barusia, where the guards arrested a poodle for wearing national, *i.e.* revolutionary, colours ; or the empire of the Septentriones, where one soldier’s life was esteemed worth the lives of one hundred civilians. But he had the misfortune to be in command of the army in a country in which certain anti-military fictions were still necessarily maintained. They were merely fictions ; yet he, like his royal master, was obliged to pretend to consider them realities, and, as such, to be influenced by them ! He considered that the Duke of Othyris deserved

punishment without bias or mercy, but he knew that such punishment would arouse dangerous resentment in the city and in many parts of the country. He felt also that the national mind was so feeble and so prejudiced that if an act were humane it was considered laudable. No government (as no war) could be conducted on humane principles ; but the public everywhere, though in war it realises this great truth, in peace ignores it, even considers it horrible.

Ionides Aracœli, the War Minister, a civilian who knew as much of war as a child of therapeutics, and whose mind always trotted humbly after the superior minds of his sovereign and of Lipsahl, and indeed only existed to be their echo in the Chamber and their instrument at the War Office, was perfectly ready to do or to say whatever he might be told to do or say. But in his innermost soul he hoped that no severity would be used. For the civilian mind, however indoctrinated by a warlike Press, remains feminine, or at least appears feminine to the military mind, which considers itself alone truly masculine ; and the feminine mind is always captivated by the sensational charm of such an altruistic action as this folly on the Field of Ares.

There only remained the Prefect of the Palace, Baron Zelia, the King's favourite and confidant, if the monarch could be supposed to admit those crutches of the feeble, either favourites or confidants, into his robust and all-sufficing existence. Baron Zelia ventured to say openly in a few well-chosen and delicate words that the act on the Field of Ares had pleased the people of Helios ; that no doubt it merited censure in many ways, but

that the people approved of it, and the approval of the people should not be completely disregarded.

Why, the King wondered, was what was idiotic always popular? Who ever heard of a sound and sensible action being so? What was hysterical, high flown, hyperbolic, always captivated the public fancy. Why was his second son popular? Because he was a visionary and a fool. Zelia affirmed that the absurd and offensive action of his second son had been warmly admired and applauded by the people; there was no doubt about that; and though the people were no more in his own sight than a herd of swine, he knew that if the swine took to running amuck they might carry with them him and his over the precipice. The precipice was always there, dark, deep, unpleasant, an ever-yawning tomb; dynasties older, safer, stronger than his, had been hurled into such a pit before then.

In the King's character there was one supremely useful trait: it was the power he possessed of keeping back his anger and his appetites in subjection to his interests. Whoever possesses that power is sure, whether in private or in public life, of a considerable measure of individual success. The King had not a great character or great intelligence, but what he had of either he kept well in hand; even his instincts of brutality and authority he could subordinate to the demands of his interests.

The Emperor of the Guthones, his sister's son, was the one person for whom the King entertained a sincere envy and admiration. Julius had a manner of telling his army that he expected it to massacre its fellow-countrymen, whenever desired, which rivalled the finest times of mediæval

despotism. He had a felicitous familiarity in his relations with the Deity, coupled with a reverential admiration of himself and of his own acts, his own speeches, his own talents and policies, which John of Gunderöde admired respectfully, though the stolid common-sense of his own temper prevented him from equalling them. To rise to those supreme heights of self-adoration it is needful to have more than one *grain de folie* in one's moral and mental composition, and the King had no *grains de folie* in his composition ; he was entirely practical and sensible.

Soldiers, police, and the Deity, were the three forces on which both sovereigns relied to keep themselves in power, and their peoples quiet ; but John of Gunderöde felt that his nephew was the finer artist of the two in his ability to take so very seriously the last of the trio.

King John certainly believed in a Providence in that vague manner in which most men of the world believe in that which they do not take the trouble to think about, but which is considered a generally received and wholly respectable tradition of considerable utility at certain moments. But to the Emperor of the Guthones his God was a continual presence, like that, in a banking or mercantile house of business, of the venerable senior partner who leaves every initiative to the junior partner, but is always to be relied on for a signature at the necessary moment, and is eminently precious as a quotable authority.

The two views were as dissimilar as are those of a suspicious man and of a confident child. Yet at the back of each of their minds there was one common thought. The Deity to each of them was of great use in impressing the masses and upholding

the crown ; and if either of them should go to war, the Divine name would be held in front of them like a shield, and make all carnage and looting, and burning and torturing, which the wars might involve, seem necessary, justifiable, and even benevolent measures, to which no one could be opposed except 'cranks.'

The family of Julius, the Lillienstauffen, had been in their origin, like the Gunderöde, lords of a small feudal fief, high set on stony hills above morass and plain, whence they had descended to kidnap travellers and pilgrims, and wreck convoys and mule-trains. Like the Gunderöde, they had progressed from one rank to another, and turned all their neighbours' misfortunes to their own account, until they had become first margraves, then princes, then kings, then emperors, distancing the Gunderöde, and finally ruling over an immense and powerful conglomeration of States which regarded the head of the House as their suzerain, or, as Julius preferred to phrase it, 'Supreme Envoy of God.'

'I and God,' said Julius ; King John was contented only to say 'I.' In his shrewd and practical mind he had an impression that the addition weakened the royal or imperial claim to infallibility. In his own discourses he always kept the Deity far away in the background, as a vague and indefinite potentiality completely eclipsed by its vice-regents, the monarchs. But he nevertheless admired the manner in which Julius flourished his God in the face of Christian and Paynim, whilst instructing his soldiers that their most sacred duty would be to swill the conduits of the capital with the national blood, if he, Julius, should ever order them so to do.

Like all truly great men Julius did not allow his partnership with Providence to prevent his devoting the most minute attention to details, such as the length of his grenadiers' hair, the device on his fusiliers' buttons, the colour of a stripe, the quality of a stuff, or the changes in the cut of a tunic. He would get up before dark to sketch a design for a sleeve-cuff; and would consign a guardsman to arrest who had a speck on his pipe-clay. Thus it was with a gaze terrible as Medusa's, and searching as a microscopic lens, that he had that day sat on his war-horse and inspected his uncle's forces.

His tongue was glib in compliment and congratulation, but his hawk's eyes were merciless in the detection of defects in that military machine which in his estimation only existed to be at once the plaything and the thunderbolt of monarchs.

King John knew that his own machine was far from faultless, despite the pains with which he had consecrated his life to its dressage and dominance. The people of Helianthus were not a race to give full satisfaction to a martinet; they could not be made perfectly rigid, passive, accurate puppets of iron and clock-work. Their blood was hot, their tempers were unsuited to compulsion; their limbs were graceful often, but seldom strong; their natural movements were careless, easy, indolent; they drank when they were thirsty, unbuttoned their jackets when they were hot, fell out of line when anything tempted them on the march; the best amongst them never looked 'smart' in the martinet's sense of the word.

'It is not an army; it is a rabble in uniform,' thought Julius, as he sat on his charger beside the



flagstaff. If I threw a few thousand of my iron-sides against it, they would double it up like a pancake !'

He had seen it often, and he had always found it the same, and John of Gunderöde guessed the unspoken thought.

The King had done his best : he had spared no brutality, he had shown no clemency, he had punished with unexampled severity every lightest breach of discipline ; he had cashiered generals for the smallest indulgence and the most trivial insubordination ; he had confirmed the death-sentences of courts-martial, and had spurned the wretched mothers and wives who knelt at his feet to implore mercy for the condemned ; he had never yielded for an instant to any weakness, and had never spared either himself or others in his effort to crush all manhood out of three hundred thousand men. Most of his rank and file were peasants : youngsters who had been poorly fed from their cradles ; they were slight of muscle, of build, of stamina ; they bore ill the weight of their accoutrements, the constraint of their uniforms, the confinement of their barracks ; they were children of the valleys and the mountains, used to run with bare feet through the thyme and the wild sage, and pipe on their cut reeds, as their forefathers had done in the days when Pan was god of the woodland world. As modern eyes view soldiers, these conscripts, even after three years under arms, matched ill with the muscular, bearded, Herculean human-engines of war, fed on strong beer and fat meat, who were commanded by the Emperor of the Guthones.

Julius, in speech most flattering, yet always made King John feel that his artillery was six months behind

the last invention in ordnance, that his biggest foot guards were short of stature, that his smartest regiments straggled a little in their march past ; that, when his grenadiers tramped by in line, some man's tip of nose, or tip of boot, was sure to be an inch in advance of the rest. Some cavalry horse unlike his fellows in shape or size or colour or breed, some gap in the order of battery following battery, some young trooper visibly uneasy and awkward in his saddle, some driver letting his team buck or his wheels lock—some error, offence, or imperfection, there always was.

The keen gaze of his visitor noted, he knew, every sign of such irregularity ; trifles in the sight of an ignorant civilian, but unpardonable offences in the sight of a military monarch. In such hours John of Gunderöde suffered acutely. Therefore, that a break in the march past should have occurred in the presence of Julius, was an unendurable humiliation to him in his own eyes.

The Guthones were a northerly people ; they were a beer-filled people ; they were a people who had for many generations always been drilled from their cradles ; their land had for many centuries been cut up into tiny principalities, but each of these little pieces had been ruled with a rod of iron ; they were used to live with their feet in the stocks and their necks in steel collars. They submitted to be the living pegs of a perpetual game of *kriegspiel* without protest, and they scarcely grumbled when their masters broke their ribs to teach them to stand straight. These are of course the model subjects of a State, the ideal *plebs*, the true *chair à canon* ; but they do not exist everywhere.

The King, who had a great deal of Guthonic blood in him, spent his life in the effort to make the Helianthines resemble the Guthones. But he might as well have tried to make a greyhound a bulldog. The fair shores of Helianthus had been desired, attacked, ravaged, seized, laid desolate, scores of times ever since the ponderous galleys of Asiatic foes had first been driven through the waters of the Mare Magnum by slaves chained to the oars. The King knew that they would be so desired, so attacked, again and again, in the centuries to come, and that by no one else were they so likely to be desired and attacked as by this young man, his well-beloved nephew, who kissed him on both cheeks, and, profiting by an affectionate intimacy, studied and espied every thin armour-plate in his navy, every ill-buttoned tunic in his army.

There was no security in the future. What the world calls peace is but a suspension of hostilities, a jealous watching of wild beasts. King John knew, as his nephew knew, that the army of Helianthus would not be able to stand against an invasion of the Guthones; that, if unsupported, its young battalions, ill-fed and with no naturally martial instincts, would immediately, however commanded or however incited, give way before the brawny and beer-filled iron-sides of Julius. It was one of those anxieties of which no man can speak, which put into words would seem to disgrace the speaker. But it was in the King's mind at all times. Who could be sure that a turn in the wheel of fortune might not give to Julius the excuse, the opportunity, the pretext which he craved?

For the King did not believe as solidly as he would have wished to do in the future in-

dependence of Helianthus. The national unity of the Helianthines was more a phrase than a fact. A running stream between two villages, a crest of hills between two communes, was enough to make each the enemy of the other in a blood-feud lasting for centuries. At the first scream of hostile shells it was probable that the national solidarity, which existed chiefly on paper and in oratory, would fall in pieces like an unbound faggot. King John felt that if Julius himself did not live to carry out his desire, some scion of his would sooner or later send his ironclads into the Mare Magnum and his armies over the mountains of Rhætia, and the classic land would become a mere southern portion of the Guthonic realm. True, socialism in an acute form mined the Guthonic empire, but its militarism was stronger; the vanity and strength of the Guthonic people would always, or at least for a long time to come, be unable to resist the national instinct towards war and conquest, and the geographical position of Helianthus offered it as the first victim.

‘Our War-lord exacts no tribute as yet. Let us be grateful!’ thought Othyris, who was chafed and irritated in an unspeakable degree by those annual visits, ostensibly of friendship and family sentiment, in reality of inspection and criticism. He always saw, in imagination, his cousin riding on a snow-white charger down the central street of Helios at the head of victorious troops.

But that time had not then arrived.

The Emperor Julius stood by one of the windows of the apartments allotted to him in the Soleia, and smoked, and gazed over the sea, and felt with impatience that the time was not even near.

His balconies overhung the marble terraces and stairs facing the western sea ; beneath them was the safe and sheltered harbour in which his yacht was anchored and pleasure-boats awaited his choice. The air was odorous with the scent of orange and lemon flowers, and of the great white cups of magnolias ; deep-toned bells were chiming ; rose-coloured clouds floated in the sky ; the tread of a sentinel pacing the pavement beneath was the only discordant sound, but to him it had no discord—it was the welcome sound which accompanied his whole life, sleeping or waking, the assurance that his guardian angel in uniform was watching over him, the armed shape that his Heavenly Father's protection of him assumed. He saw no absurdity in this ; it was to him quite natural ; he had the same belief in his especial favour by Heaven as Mahomet had ; he did not reason, he believed ; in himself first, and then in the Deity as the creator and defender of himself.

But Heaven, favourable to him in so much, denied him the Mare Magnum.

In his few minutes of solitary reflection he looked over those beautiful waters, violet in some lights, azure in others, a malachite green or a dusky peacock-purple, farther away. Why did Providence deny him that sea ? What a harbour it would be for his battleships ! What an open portal to the conquest of Asia and of Africa ! What an outlet to his legions and to the commerce of his empire !

For there is always commerce in the dreams and ambitions of the modern monarch. The Cæsar of the twentieth century, even in his most romantic visions, always wears the grocer's apron, holds the draper's rule, loads the cattle-ship and the coal-truck ;

his flag flies from a grain-elevator, his trumpet sounds from a co-operative store ; be he as martial as he may, he cannot escape the mercantile taint of his time.

On each of his annual or biannual visits—which Elim called the ‘inspections of the War-lord’—Julius envied the possession of the Mare Magnum with all the keenness of his appetite and ambitions ; and no year brought him nearer its conquest. It would not have been difficult for him to take it ; to sweep down with the molten iron of his mobilised forces over the mountains on the north, whilst his fleet steamed into the Helianthine waters and shut the sea-gates on Helios. He would have had no fear of the result if—if Europe could have been trusted to remain neutral. But he could not trust Europe so far. Nay, he was certain that she would stop him in the defiles of the northern Alps, as a great Power had once been stopped within reach of Stamboul. Europe was not ripe for a single dominant master. She had no individual love for the King of Helianthus, but he was a stop-gap, a buffer, a safety-valve. She had no desire for a single conquering hero, for a second *parterre des rois* disarmed and made ridiculous at a second Tilsit. The condition of the nations is bad ; but a single autocrat, even such a vice-regent of Christ as Julius Imperator, would be, Europe thinks, infinitely worse.

So, impotent to realise his vast ambitions, yet hovering over them as the hawk over the pigeon’s cote, Julius came every year or two to visit his relative and ally, and to look with longing eyes and futile wishes over the luminous waters whence, ever since the days of Homer and of Hesiod, many a fleet of

fable and of history has sailed away into the golden glory of the setting sun, or issued with swelling canvas from out the rosy dusk of dawn. Who could say that some time might not come when Europe, exhausted, over-burdened, or grown indifferent, might not let the hawk loosen the hasp of the pigeon-cote with his beak ?

It is said that a monarch, being asked who he would be, if he could choose, replied : ‘ If I were not myself, I would be my nephew Julius.’ But Julius was not greatly to be envied ; the torment of an insatiable and unrealisable ambition was like a perpetual fire in his blood ; he wanted worlds to conquer ; he wanted the chariot of the sun to take him to the capture of new solar systems.

When the earth is mapped out on a papier-mâché globe for the use of schools, and travelling tickets to go round it are things of daily life, it has ceased to be a sphere sufficient for great ambitions. A great ambition requires the immeasurable, requires a vague distance of golden vapour which can give it a horizon, and allure it with a mirage. The earth was too small a sphere for Julius, and, unwisely, he had hampered himself in the use of such space and opportunity as it offered, by having called himself publicly and often an apostle of peace. He had a fine engine of war at his elbow, but he had told mankind that he loved them too well to use it, which was a superfluous and paralysing assertion.

True, it is possible to eat your own words, if you have a good digestion and good teeth ; but it is better not to have any words which require eating. It is better not to compare yourself with Christ, if you are desirous of behaving like Attila.

Julius turned from the balcony with an impatient sigh, and flung his cigar into the magnolia grove which faced it ; his attendants hastened to make his evening toilette, and array him in the glittering uniform of that Helianthine regiment of Cuirassiers of which he was the Honorary Colonel.

Helianthus was not for him. Not yet, at least ; not yet, he thought, as the Helianthine Orders were fastened on his breast. All things come to those who know how to wait, says the proverb. Alas, no ! not all things. Only one thing is certain,—death. Of that no one will cheat us, whether we be emperors or beggars ; and the omnipotent Julius sighed.

A little later, after dinner that evening, he solved the problem of the treatment due to the offender on the Field of Ares. In a quarter of an hour's chat with his uncle in the smoking-room, with that tact and grace which characterised him when he chose to call them to his aid, he entreated as a favour to himself that nothing should be said or done regarding his cousin's breach of discipline.

‘One must not blame an error of the heart,’ he said ; and he combined with true diplomatic skill the pleasure of interceding for a man to whom such intercession would be very bitter, and of conveying in honeyed phrase his sense that the classic Helianthus had many a lesson still to learn from the juvenile empire of the Guthones. In the art of presenting a rose for the buttonhole with a pin carefully adjusted to prick the skin under the buttonhole, Julius of Lillienstauffen had no superior. His rose was always sweet ; his pin was always sharp.

Of course at his request the eccentric act was not



chastised as it should have been ; no request of such a guest could be refused. It was ill-judged amiability in the guest, thought the King and his generals. But Elim knew that it was not amiability at all, but some motive exceedingly different.

To him, at all times, these visits of his cousin were a painful, a hated, ordeal. He smarted under the concealed patronage, the too extreme praise, the highly coloured asseverations of family affection, the cruelly courteous expressions of admiration of an army in which deficiency was plainly more visible than excellence and perfection lagged hopelessly behind.

‘You cannot now deny the tact and the magnanimity of the Emperor,’ said the Crown Prince to his wife, who did not reply. She knew that the tact was always there, unless temper got the better of it ; the magnanimity she did not see, but she dared not say so. To lay another under an obligation is sometimes a very sweet and subtle form of cruelty. Othyris would have preferred two years in a fortress, or any kind of military degradation, to being under an obligation to his imperial cousin. But no choice was given him ; and the King took care that the pill should be made as bitter as it could be by the aloes and assafoetida of his own pharmacopœia. Julius, however, enjoyed a favour in the sight of the people of Helios which he had never attained before ; and the public having become aware that he had interceded to avert punishment from their favourite, cheered him with sincerity and enthusiasm for the first time as he drove to the station.

‘I believe they would receive me with cordiality if I conquered them,’ he thought, as the same vision which had floated before the mind of Elim, of himself,

Julius Imperator, on a white charger, riding through the city of Helios at the head of his victorious army, beguiled his imagination as his train bore him to the north-west, homeward to his empire in time to hold a review of troops on the morrow on the sandy plains of his military capital, and preach a sermon in the afternoon in his lay capital, in a newly-built cathedral : a sermon of which the text was, 'Blessed are the peace-makers, for of them is the kingdom of heaven.'

'He is very clever, our Julius,' thought the old Emperor Gregory, ruler of the Septentriones, when he read the telegraphed heads of that sermon. 'He would be cleverer still, if he could only hold his tongue !'

But that was the one thing which Julius could not do. Nature had denied him the power of silence, or the appreciation of the truth that if speech is silver, silence is gold.

Julius, who was one of the multitude of the revered Gregory's great-grandchildren, amused that shrewd nonagenarian infinitely. Gregory too had been a Zeus, but Gregory had taken his own supreme divinity more philosophically and less pompously. Gregory had always been before everything else a man of the world ; and a man of the world never overloads colour, or enforces emphasis.

When Othyris also read the *précis* of that sermon in the newspapers he could willingly have taken his imperial cousin by the throat ; there are services which make the sensitive smart more painfully than any outrage, and every syllable of that oration seemed to him to emphasise the pardon asked for by Julius for the offence on the Field of Ares.

## CHAPTER IV

HELIANTHUS was a country with a glorious past history, and a present which did not satisfy those who remembered its past. It was assured by its rulers that it was free as air ; the modern synonym for freedom is taxation, and of this form of liberty it certainly enjoyed its full share ; of other forms it did not see much. Everything was taxed in it, from the owls' nests on the roofs of the cabins to the unhappy asses which drew the wooden ploughs. In return, it received a great many compliments from foreign nations, and various visits from foreign sovereigns ; possessed a nominally free Press, of which the freedom was duly tempered by fines and imprisonment ; and enjoyed the enrolment of a vast rabble of its own sons, dressed up in clumsy uniforms ; huge ships of copper, or steel, or aluminium, lying at anchor in its beautiful harbours ; crowds of spies and gendarmes in every one of its towns ; armed men at all its gates to see that no bunch of grass, or half-fledged pullet, passed them without paying its dues ; and innumerable prisons, fortresses in exterior and hells within, where strength and energy and vigour rotted into gibbering idiotcy, and young men grew aged in a year.

Helianthus had three generations earlier dreamed a

fair and glittering dream of liberty, and had armed like a second Joan of Arc; but like Joan the fetters had been put on her limbs, and the smoke of the pyre had stifled her breath. Joan died; Helianthus did not die—she accepted the loss of her dream.

The land is sadly changed in its physical and architectural features; the destruction of its forests, the drying up of its rivers, the appropriation by speculators of its torrents and lakes, the demolition of its castles and palaces, have in many parts made it featureless, shadeless, arid, the few green things which still keep life in them being ruthlessly gnawed, as they sprout, by the famished flocks of goats and sheep. But in many other portions of its legend-haunted soil it is beautiful still; in its limpid atmosphere, in the lovely colour of its mountains, in its ancient gardens, in its gorgeous sunsets, in its moonlit nights, in its roseate dawns, in its immemorial woods, melodious with the voice of the nightingale, something of the youth of the world still lingers, still awakes with the blossoms of spring. In harsh incongruity with it, incongruous as the scream of steam on its waters, as the buzz of machines in its plough-furrows, as the rush of electric cars down its ancient streets, is the House of Gunderöde, which has ruled over it for three generations.

Having helped to free the blood-mare from the lasso cast over her, her saviours put a halter in its stead upon her neck, and jumped upon her back with an agility so admirable that the rest of the nations applauded. A circus trick is often confused by the world with noble horsemanship.

The Gunderöde were chiefly, in their stock and in their temper, Guthonic. They were a northern race,

partly through origin, and largely by marriage. Their character was the antithesis of that of the Helianthine. Connubial unions had given them many mixed strains in their blood, but of pure Helianthine blood they had not a drop.

They claimed descent from Orderic, a chief of the Huns. From the sixth to the ninth century they had been robber-barons; in the Middle Ages they had become lords and margraves of the south-east of Europe; in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by craft and judgment and shrewd watching, by the seizing of opportunity, the making of alliances, and the seeking and forming of great marriages, they had increased their position to a petty sovereignty; a duchy at first, then a principality, then a kingdom, gradually strengthened and widened by the annexation of frontier towns, of ecclesiastical cities, of military bishoprics, of mountain strongholds, of hill and lake, of moor and fief.

The Gunderöde family were physically brave, of course (for in those times courage did not excite the surprise which it awakens nowadays!), but they were politic, wary, keen to amass, slow to relinquish; and these qualities obtained them more advancement than did their bravery. The sword of the Gunderödes had a cross for its hilt and a double edge to its blade; it served them equally well when they swore an oath as when they cut down a foe. The oaths were not always, nor were they often, kept; but the foe was always cleft through skull and crop.

In the hurly-burly of the Napoleonic wars they had been careful to hunt with the hounds and run with the hare. All things brought them harvest. They were careful, cautious, and cold. Although

they had been always absolutists in action they had contrived to obtain a reputation for liberal principles. A wild boar, breaking a huge chain fastened round his loins, was their emblem. It pleased the popular fancy as an emblem of freedom. The boar sat square upon the throne ; and, thinking it a pity that the chain should be of no use, had it picked up and soldered on to the limbs of some of the persons who had helped him to mount ; there was thus no danger of their ever making him descend.

In the effigy of the wild boar it was true the animal was represented in the act of breaking his own chains ; but the populace, paraphrasing Dante, found that he broke them only to forge and rivet them the more firmly on others. In fact, by the time that the third generation occupied the Helianthine throne, the Gunderödes had acquired the belief that they were its occupants by hereditary right, even as the up-stream wolf, as Mark Twain calls the astute beast of the fable, held the belief that the stream was his by divine right. The timid remonstrances of the nation were heard no more than were those of the lamb by the wolf.

The House of Gunderöde, once taking, always retained ; the people of Helianthus understood too late what they had done when they had lent themselves to its fatal absorption of their birthright. The acquisition of supreme dominion had been so gradual that the people still did not entirely realise what they had lost. The outward forms of constitutional freedom were carefully preserved ; the people did not perceive that the substance had disappeared out of their hold. One of the oddest facts about the last hundred years is the manner in which the popu-

lace everywhere has parted with its liberties, and been persuaded to imagine that it has increased them.

A similar history to that of the Helianthines can be told of other peoples. Reigning races resemble planets : some are still nebulous and scarcely formed, bathed in the effulgence of a rising sun ; others are exhausted and chill, growing dim in their twilight ; others again are at their perihelion, most glorious to behold ; but the manner of formation and increase of them all is identical.

If a sceptical mind inquires doubtfully why the planets were created at all, such a mind no doubt belongs to an anarchist and not to an astronomer.

The first Gunderöde who had been called King of Helianthus (he had never been crowned, nor have his descendants) had been the famous Theodoric, invariably called the Liberator, of whom the effigies in bronze, or marble, or stone, stand thick as pebbles on a beach all over the land. His successor had been his son Theodoric II., a nonentity though a martinet. The third in succession was the present ruler, John Orderic, who had ascended the throne at five-and-twenty years old, and had found the seat to his liking. He had not the wonderful protean abilities of his nephew Julius, which enabled the latter to be a despot and to seem a dilettante, to garrotte a nation and to play the violin, to telephone the order for a massacre and to model the shape of a fusee-box : that kind of activity was not in John of Gunderöde, who was as incapable of versatility as a wooden nutmeg. He even, indeed, viewed with contempt these kaleidoscopic qualities in his nephew ; and remained cold when the War-lord of the Guthones sang, fiddled, painted, modelled, wrote an oratorio,

or designed a uniform, to the admiration of a wondering world.

But he was a shrewd, keen, selfish, cautious ruler and reader of men. Sentiment never interfered in him with judgment, and no instinct of kindness ever weakened his wisdom. He was exceedingly strong in many things ; in nothing stronger than in never being drawn into giving his reasons. Whoever gives his reasons, gives a hostage to his adversaries. He acted ; and let others waste their time, if they chose, in conjectures as to why his acts took such a shape instead of such another. This spared him much time, and saved him from ever contradicting himself. It was thus that he made a gramme of brains do the work of an ounce, and a very ordinary personage appear a statesman and a diplomatist.

The brain, moreover, grows keener by being incessantly sharpened on the grindstone of self-interest and suspicion ; and by the time he was forty years old he had become an able tactician and an unerring observer. Had he been born in private life he would have been respected by his neighbours, secret but severe in his business transactions, harsh but faithful as a husband, cold but careful as a father ; he would have gone unloved through life, but in death would have been regretted by his bankers if cursed by his clerks.

In the exalted position which he filled, his worst qualities were cultured and strengthened, and his better qualities early perished of atrophy, under the stifling compost which makes the hotbeds of Courts.

The Chinese, it is said, put a child into a vase of pottery and keep him in it until he is a man ; in



consequence his limbs and body never grow bigger than the pot which confines them. The pot into which a monarch is put is not seen, and does not imprison his body, only his mind ; and in old times his jester was privileged to come and shake bells, and tell truths, over the pot. But there are no jesters of that kind now ; there are only newspapers to do the fooling, and if any truth is told by them they are forthwith prosecuted for libel. Actions for *lèse-majesté* are very frequent in Helianthus ; months and even years of imprisonment punish any plain speaking about distinguished persons, so that the Press of the country never by any chance ventures to blame the House of Gunderöde.

A little girl once said to another : ‘ What do you think God is like ? ’ ‘ Like my papa,’ replied the other without hesitation. ‘ Like *my* papa, you mean,’ said the first, with indignant conviction. It is probable that every monarch has in his mind’s eye a Deity fashioned, not like his sire, but after his own likeness, or rather that which he imagines is his likeness. This Deity is more or less real, more or less near, more or less to be admired or dreaded, according to the temperament of the sovereign he protects. Some go so far as to believe that they have received an *exequatur* from the Most High in the same way as they give one to their clergy. It is these rulers who believe in the crime of *lèse-majesté* and imprison professors, caricaturists, comic singers, and workmen for the treason of satire or laughter. Others do not go so far as this ; they have doubts about their own celestial origin and appointment ; they imagine that what they call Providence is a kind of Chief Constable, and consider themselves as appointed his sub-

inspectors ; but they, also, believe in *lèse-majesté* as the policeman believes in tip-cat and hooligans ; like tip-cat and hooligans it must be put down at all costs.

To this latter category John of Gunderöde inclined from the bias of his temperament. He was a man of much good common-sense, and his Deity was a nebulous personality, vague, remote, not needing much consideration, a useful figure to carry in procession, as a black Virgin or a waxen Jesus is carried round a town on great occasions such as a visitation of cholera, or a famine. That he was guided by the Most High when he made war, sent socialists to a penitentiary, escaped a pistol shot, or prevented a popular measure from becoming law, he did not believe, as his nephew Julius believed it of himself ; he did not think himself the Elder Brother of Christ, and the administrator of Providence, as Julius believed himself to be. Deity was to him a *quantité négligeable*, exceedingly *négligeable*. Cromwell, in his famous exhortation, placed his God first, and his gunpowder second. John of Gunderöde reversed the order of the precedence. The casting of his cannon was of more importance to him than the celebration of a Te Deum or a Hosanna ; his mind was narrow but robust.

Second only to the political successes of his reign was the interest possessed for him by the fluctuations of his investments. A potentate has lately said with considerable *naïveté* that the prestige of his order has diminished in these later years ; he might have said that it is not possible for any one man to be at once a Cæsar Emperor, a Grand Monarque, and an impassioned investor in Preference Shares.

At present the nations in general do not realise that the anointed sovereigns of the world have

swords at their sides and cannon at their command, and crowns and sceptres, orbs and miniver, in their wardrobes, but keep in their hands the Share List as their favourite reading : when the nations do realise this, 'prestige' will drop lower still, and crowns will cease to be quoted at par.

At an early age the present King of Helianthus had been wedded by his father to a princess of a small northern kingdom ; a plain, dull, uninteresting young woman who gave birth to a son, or, as the journalists said, to a Crown Prince, and then, with her usual discretion, retired into the grave, leaving her place to be filled by a lovelier successor, a granddaughter of the famous aged Emperor Gregory, who was called the Nestor of Europe, the ruler of that enormous empire of which the huge penumbra overshadows two quarters of the globe.

She was an exceedingly beautiful woman, with an infinite grace of form and bearing, and a wistful melancholy in her eyes, which were of the colour of the northern seas in summer. In ten sad years this patient victim of policy had borne King John four sons and two daughters : Elim, Duke of Othyris ; Alexis, Prince of Tyras ; Constantine, Duke of Esthonia ; Frederic, Count of Idumæa ; and two daughters, Ottoline and Euphrosyne, the former married to a Lillienstauffen, the latter betrothed to her cousin, a great-grandson of the Emperor Gregory.

On the hard granite of the King's irresponsible, sullen, unkind temperament, the Queen's sensitive and timid nature had been thrown as a hind is thrown on a rock to be grallocked. Fear came into her lovely startled eyes whenever she heard his step or his voice, as into the eyes of the doe when she sees the steel gleam

of the death-tubes shine above the heather. Her own family knew that she was extremely unhappy; but no imperial or royal family can interfere in the unhappiness which may ensue from one of its State alliances; the only anxiety and effort of the family is to prevent any publicity of the fact that the union is discord, and this was easy in her case, for she shrank from all publicity herself. '*Faut ensorceler ton homme, ma petite! Ouf! tu es belle!*' said old Gregory to her once; but he knew that no living woman could move by a hair's breadth the temper of John of Gunderöde any more than a moonbeam can melt a stone. That the King was not more unkind than he was to her, was due to the great respect he felt for the aged tyrant of the Septentriones, and to the residence in the country of one of her brothers, the Grand Duke Basil. Her first-born, so like her physically and morally, had for her sake as well as for his own been dear to her brother, a celibate, a connoisseur, a fine musician, a profound scholar, a prey to the melancholy of desires which nothing earthly could satisfy, and of ill-health which could be mitigated by care and by climate, but never be cured. The greater part of Elim's early youth was spent with his uncle Basil in the palaces which the Grand Duke had purchased in his sister's adopted country—that Helianthus so dear to all Hellenists and Latinists for its incomparable traditions, its art, its literature, its history.

The boy, extremely impressionable in feeling, was strongly resistant to alien mental influence. Nothing could be done with him intellectually when he did not choose. They could make him unhappy, but they could not make him receptive. To some kinds

of influence he was very open, but to many he was adamant. This power of passive, but unyielding resistance had preserved his originality.

To his uncle Basil, with his scholar's reverence for the past and his satirist's contempt for the present, his brother-in-law of Gunderöde was an intolerably false note in that classic harmony which had been called, for two thousand years, Helianthus ; a false note, like a motor-car on the plain of Thebes, a cyclist under the palms of Nile, a conscript on guard on the Capitol, a policeman in front of York Minster, an American tourist smoking where the lions still roam amongst the ruins of Palmyra ; like any one or any thing discordant, incongruous, irritating, commonplace, intolerable ; absolutely intolerable as the ruler of a State which was steeped in classic and poetic memories, and was in its atmosphere, in its legends, in its genius, in its landscapes, full of a spiritual and melancholy beauty.

'Heavens and earth, he is as incongruous here as a kepi set on the head of an Apollo !' thought the Grand Duke. But of what he thought and of what he felt concerning his sister's husband he never spoke.

Between Elim and his father there had been always a great antagonism. As a child he had a very sensitive musical ear, and the shrieking of fifes and the beating of drums were a torture to him ; he would run off and hide anywhere he could, away from the squeak of the bugle, and cover his ears with his hands whenever he heard regiments marching past the palace, or merely a company going to change guard. His governor, by the King's order, showed no mercy to this instinct ; and frequently the

boy was taken to the Field of Ares, or to one of the barrack-yards, simply to punish his tympanum for its sensitiveness and give his nerves cruel suffering. To his father's taste, the shrill fife and the sullen drum gave the only melody worth hearing. When his wife timidly urged in Elim's excuse, that the child Wolfgang Mozart had shown a similar sensibility, the monarch looked at her with astonishment. What was Mozart? A *Kapellmeister*! Mozart had never been even a drum-major!

When Elim was ten years old a sea-eagle was brought one day to the Palace, and caged on one of the terraces overlooking the sea. It had a wounded wing and had been captured when resting on the mast of a fishing-coble. The imprisonment and immobility of the grand bird tortured the little Prince every day that he went into the gardens. To see its closed eyes, its drooped pinions, its ruffled and lustreless plumage, its wretched restless movements at times in its narrow prison, followed by long hours when it sat motionless in stupor and despair, so wrought upon his nerves that it became almost an illness to him. In vain did his tutors punish, and his mother try to reason with him.

'Set him free,' he said in an anguish of sympathy. 'Set him free. Shut me up in his place. But set him free.'

The Queen, who knew that her best-beloved son had inherited that impulse of tenderness and pity from herself, was at last so moved by the distress of the child, and that of the bird, that she ventured to beg for the freedom of the eagle of her husband.

The broken wing had healed, flight would, she urged, be possible, and a painful sight would be spared to a sensitive little soul.

The King seldom granted any request of hers : her wishes always appeared to him sentimental fancies which were best nipped in the bud ; everything seemed sentimental in his sight which was not connected with finance or with the army. She had no influence whatever on him ; her delicacy of beauty, physical and moral, was no more to him than the rose hues of the dianthus—no more than the gemmæ are to the rocks on which the sea waves cast them. Her intercession was therefore seldom successful, her gentle voice was seldom listened to ; but to her surprise he this time acceded to her wish.

‘But make this condition with your boy,’ he said to her. ‘He is idle, they tell me, and backward. Let him learn the first book of the *Iliad* by heart in the Latin translation. When he can recite it, the bird shall be set free.’

Elim, who was certainly backward, gave himself to the task as he had never done to any other through fear of punishment or promise of pleasure. He learned the allotted verse with a stubborn devotion to its difficult text which his tutors had never seen in him, and in much less time than they had expected. With a rapidity which seemed incredible to them, and a perfect accuracy of quantity and of accent, he committed to memory the long sonorous lines, and declaimed them to his preceptor, standing with his hands behind his back, and the sun in his face, on the sea-terrace where the bird was caged beneath a spreading plane-tree.

His parents were present ; his mother’s eyes were

filled with tears of delight and pride ; his father stood with his eternal cigarette between his lips, and listened with critical coldness and in harsh readiness to discover a flaw in word or measure ; he had come in from shooting, and his gun was lying across a garden chair by his side. But Elim made no mistake. Whilst he recited the verse his eyes were fixed on the dark, motionless, pining form of the imprisoned eagle. Its ransom depended on himself ; he made no fault of memory or quantity. When he had spoken the last line he stood silent, breathless, red as a rose, with hope and expectation.

‘It was well said, was it not?’ his mother murmured timidly to her husband.

The King nodded.

‘Open the eagle’s cage,’ he said to one of his gentlemen.

The child sprang forward and kissed his father’s hand in a rapture of joy and gratitude.

‘No sentiment!’ said the sovereign, putting him aside with some impatience. He disliked all emotion and all demonstration.

One of the gentlemen of the household had made believe to open the door of the cage, but in reality a gardener had executed the order ; it was done not without danger, for the bird, realising its liberty, might have used its strength of beak or claws.

They stood together and watched, the sovereigns in front, the boy by their side, the courtiers behind. The ecstasy and expectation on Elim’s fair face were like those on the face of a young seraph in a Fra Angelico fresco ; his lips were parted, his breath came fast and loud, he trembled in every nerve with his great joy.



The door of the cage was drawn open ; the men retreated ; for some moments the bird did not seem to see that anything had happened ; he sat, a miserable heap of dull tarnished feathers, his head sunk into his neck. Then, slowly, he seemed to become aware of more air, of more light, of something unusual ; he shook his plumage, his wings began to thrill and move and open, his head was lifted, his eyes gazed at his comrade the sun in the blue summer heavens.

The Queen thought of the eagle in the story of Dostoiewsky, the eagle that the prisoners in Siberia set free, and watched, winging his way over the snowy steppes in that freedom which was for ever denied to themselves.

‘Dear child!’ she murmured, and laid her hand on Elim’s golden head.

The bird paused a moment on the threshold of his prison, then with expanded wings sailed, slowly and majestically, over the marble parapet of the terrace, out into the air and above the sea.

Elim stood transfixed and transfigured by ecstasy as his gaze followed the flight of the captive he had set free.

The King also followed the flight of the bird with his eyes. His gun, lying across the chair, was loaded ; he took it, and raised it to his shoulder, aimed at the eagle rising higher and higher and higher into the blue ether, and fired.

The shot rang sharp and hard through the morning stillness. Another followed it. The eagle dropped dead into the sea. John of Gunderöde gave his breech-loader to one of his attendants.

Elim, his eyes wide open in horror, swayed

blindly to and fro, then fell back insensible into his mother's trembling arms.

'Little idiot!' said his father, with contempt. He had not meant to do anything especially unkind; he had followed that insane impulse of the sportsman to kill everything that flies, which, in its continual indulgence, becomes a form of dementia.

The courtiers, the ladies, the preceptors, joined in a chorus of wondering admiration: what sight, what precision, what wonderful accuracy of aim!

The Crown Prince gave the big boy's guffaw of enjoyment. The younger children screamed shrilly with delight and danced in glee.

For several weeks Elim's life was despaired of; meningitis in its worst shape pressed its red-hot iron gauntlet on his brain and spine; the devotion of his mother saved him.

From that morning his soul was filled with the most unconquerable distrust of every act and word of his father's; and a sombre and mutual dislike grew up between them as between the betrayed and the betrayer. It grew with growth, and each felt for the other an unchangeable and deeply-rooted aversion.

After twenty years of an exemplary life, during which she had never known a moment's free will, or been allowed a moment's individual action, the fair Queen had died, as a flower without light or air fades away and perishes.

'No one wants me any more,' she said, with a patient smile. Her eldest and best-beloved son threw his arms about her with passionate tenderness as though he would dispute her with death itself, for there was an exquisite sympathy between them.

‘I shall want you all my life, my darling mother!’

Her wasted, transparent hand rested fondly on his hair. ‘Oh, my love, you will have so many other ties.’

‘Perhaps so, perhaps not,’ said Elim. ‘None will or can be to me what you have been, my dearest and best!’

He had given to her the most devoted affection and sympathy, and his indignation at his father’s treatment of her had been only the more intense and embittered because it had perforce been shut up in his own breast.

Elim grew up to a beautiful adolescence, and a manhood of great promise for the future, should he ever reign; he resembled the Adonis of the Soleia in form and feature, and was remarkable for grace and charm rather than for masculine force. His health was good, or, at least, he never gratified any of the Court physicians by complaining of it; his constitution was sound, but he suffered from the chief of modern diseases, ennui; and it is the procreator of many others. It always seemed to him that he had been born to be the victim of captivity like any unhappy animal who comes out of its mother’s womb in the cage of a menagerie, and passes infancy and youth behind those bars, and is supposed by fools to know no other life and to want no other, because of any other he has only instinct and no experience to tell him.

That he could never be induced to see that his own order was a thing apart, a species made of different clay to the general, was an exasperation to all his relatives. Princes, although in felt hats and ulsters,

ought to feel themselves altogether apart from the crowds similarly clad on a highway, a race-course, or a skating-ground. This sense of his own electness was altogether missing in him ; and his want of it was an affront to those who had the most profound belief that they were pure gold, and every one else copper, or tin, or nickel.

The diversions of his brother Tyras were chiefly such as a decent street-sweeper or stone-breaker would be ashamed of, but they did not offend the family as greatly as the opinions and practices of Othyris. Privilege covered them ; whereas Othyris tore privilege to tatters. He hated the men who bent their backs in two as they were received by him ; he hated the women who dropped before him curtsies so low that they seemed to sink into the carpet. The supple spine, the pliable knees, seemed to him to degrade humanity in their persons. He was popular with the nation, but the Court was unanimous in its dislike of him. The Court saw its vested interests, its shibboleths, its salaries, its actual existence, menaced by him ; and except in a few women he had no friends in his father's palaces or even in his own. Every one whose interests were rooted in Court favour, Court honours, Court pomps and vanities, dignities and perquisites, knowing that he was near enough in the line of succession to make his advent to the throne a serious possibility, could not but view with horror and with terror the eventuality of a reign in which they would all, figuratively speaking, be put on rations of black bread, if they were not bundled neck and crop out of their Holy of Holies into ordinary and undecorated life.

When he had been a mere youth they had thought that his eccentricities would wear smooth with time ; but year after year passed, and he did not abandon his early opinions as most men do ; he did not wash in the Jordan of conventionality and become cleansed. When the Court contemplated all that such a king would mean to them, they felt that even such a saintly woman as Princess Gertrude ought to be divorced, as the Creole sinner Josephine had been, for the sake of the public weal.

‘ Mine is a *vie manquée*,’ thought Othyris often. ‘ I am of what is called royal birth, and I have no belief in royalty. I am a revolutionist at heart, but loyalty to my family forbids me to be so in action. I am an artist in instinct and appreciation, but I have not the artist’s power to create, and to absorb himself in his creations. All my sympathies are with the poor and the weak, and I am forced to live with the rich and the strong. I abhor war and militarism, and I am made, perforce, a Colonel of Cuirassiers and a General of a Division. I know not what my end may be, but I shall probably say, like my uncle Basil, “ I have loved justice and hated iniquity, wherefore now I die in exile.” ’

The Grand Duke Basil also hated the military type and hated militarism. His constitution had been ruined by its discipline, and his youth embittered by its rigours. But he was too honourable a man to permit himself to prejudice the son against the father. Elim never heard from him a disparaging word of either the King or the King’s measures ; but the influence of the intellectual atmosphere which surrounded him in his uncle’s house inevitably gave its colour and its bias to his mind, which had all the receptivity of

youth with the quick apprehension natural to talent, and an inborn tendency to resist conventional ideas. The King's aversion to his brother-in-law was as great as that of the Grand Duke to him ; but in the monarch every sentiment was subordinate to the organ of acquisitiveness ; and he loved the fortune of Basil if he detested his person. Therefore the smooth ice of a chill, impeccable courtesy covered their relations at all times, and, through his uncle's wishes and influence, Elim enjoyed a measure of repose and of freedom which otherwise would never have been his portion. In the beautiful solitudes of *Ænothrea*—his uncle's favourite sojourn—he could forget that he was a prince and be the poet, the artist, the dreamer, which nature had made him.

Basil, the King thought, emasculated the character of a youth already only too susceptible to all sentimental follies and heresies ; but if Paris were well worth the sacrifice of a mass, according to the Béarnais, the vast fortune of his brother-in-law would, he considered, be well worth that of a foolish young man ; and he was led the more easily to this conclusion by what he knew of the extreme uncertainty of the life of the Grand Duke, who had cardiac affections of the most dangerous kind, and might die at any moment—as, in fact, he did die, suddenly, as he strolled amongst his roses one summer day, when Elim was twenty years old. Everything he possessed in Helianthus, all his great estates and the chief bulk of his personalty, was bequeathed to his nephew, and rendered him one of the richest princes of Europe.

Othyris was considered by his family to encourage the most subversive projects upon his lands, and

at the same time to keep up the most antiquated absurdities. Worse still, he had even desired and asked the King's permission to refuse the grant made to him on the Civil List by the nation in common with the other princes. When he urged that he did not require such an addition to his wealth, the explanation seemed as bad as the intention which prompted it. Who had ever heard in empire, kingdom, or principality of a royal person who declined the people's money? He was not permitted by his father to have his way in this, and could only relieve his conscience by spending all of it in public works or private charity, so that the money went indirectly back to the nation which gave it: a most senseless and demoralising proceeding, according to his relatives, who always considered all provisions made for them by the State miserably mean and wholly inferior to their merits.

It also made his family very angry that Othyris would never take any precautions for his own safety. He went about in town or country, on foot or on horseback, or on his mail phæton, like any private gentleman. His indifference to danger, or his confidence in his popularity, seemed a reflection on the fears of his family in surrounding themselves with so many precautions.

He left the motor-cars and the bicycles to his brothers; they seemed to him to profane the marble dust and the herb-scented moors of Helianthus. He loved his horses; and like Lord Byron he loved to ride in the brilliant moonlight along the silent sands, or over the fragrant plains, with nothing beside him but the shadows of himself and of his steed, and the scent of the sea or the perfume of the wild thyme in

his nostrils. His stables were full of the fleetest and finest horses in Europe ; but he took no pleasure in the stupid and barbaric pastime of racing. To see a colt or a filly flogged along a course, with streaming sides and smoking nostrils, was to him a hateful sight. To enhance the interest of the struggle by putting money on it, as you add cayenne to your soup, seemed to him an avowal that you were moved by the basest of appetites ; he esteemed more highly the punters at Monte Carlo than the members of the Jockey Clubs.

‘You were born without the gambling instinct, but you can acquire it. People do not like opium when they begin it,’ said Tyras to him once. But the acquisition did not seem to him desirable ; and he remained aloof from the Turf as from the narcotic.

There was racing all over Helianthus : there had been racing of all kinds in the land for over two thousand years, and the ruins of many a great hippodrome towered on lonely wastes and amidst crowded streets, in witness of the national pastime and its universal fascination. Elim’s dislike to it, and his refusal ever to enter a horse for a race, or to keep a racing-stable, was one of the few unpopular traits in his character.

‘Go against a nation’s best interests, and as likely as not it will lick your feet,’ his uncle Basil had said once to him. ‘But oppose its amusements and its appetites, and it will gibbet you.’

‘I will take the risk,’ said Elim. ‘At least, I shall not oppose them ; but I shall not share them.’

The King did not interfere in this matter ; he felt obliged to attend the great races of the year for the sake of popularity, but he had a good deal of common-sense about certain things, and he



considered the Turf guilty of the deterioration of the equine race, by the substitution of mere speed for staying power. Races could do nothing to improve the breeds of cavalry horses ; he would have revived the massive destrier of Philippe Auguste and of Barbarossa had he been able.

So Othyris, unmolested in this matter, used his horses only for exercise ; and, although he rode far and fast, never brought them back distressed or in a lather. What he especially enjoyed was to escape from the gentlemen riding after him, and get out by himself into the solitudes of the more distant country, taking his chance of the banded robbers whose exploits still gave a dramatic colour to the thickets of oleanders and pomegranates by the sea shores, and to the ilex and olive woods of the more remote hillsides.

‘Your lonely rides are very dangerous,’ his elder brother said to him one day.

‘Yes, perhaps,’ said Othyris. ‘But not much more dangerous than to get into an electric tram-car, or to walk across the lines of light railways ; and how much more agreeable ! Besides, the brigands would not hurt me ; they would know I should be worth money ; they would even, perhaps, leave me my clothes and give me smoked kid and smuggled cigars. But the trains and the trams are democratic institutions : they would crush me as impartially as they crush counterjumpers or bankers’ clerks.’

‘You always jest,’ grumbled Theo. He himself never jested : it was said that he had never even played in his nursery days except with tin soldiers.

Between him and Othyris militarism was built up like a stone wall.

No conscript, sweating in a forced march under

the weight of arms and knapsack, hated the military service as the second son of the King hated and despised it. He wrote some poems which were called '*Dum spiro, suspiro*'; they were sent anonymously to an independent journal, and caused much wonder and comment; they caused, too, the sequestration of the newspaper at the issue of the fifth poem. As he kept his own confidence, nobody betrayed him, and when the editor received a bank-note for double the amount of the fine imposed on him, he was too wise to try to find out who was the sender.

Not less burdensome than the military obligations was the possibility that any day, any year, he might be called to occupy the throne. The Crown Prince was a sportsman, untiring and reckless; there was always the chance of some violence cutting short his life, for he was brave to fool-hardiness. When he did think of this very possible contingency, the Heir-Presumptive to the crown shrank as from a far greater calamity than death.

Othyris had no dreams or vanities to console him. He knew that kings who refuse to accept the illusions which surround them from their birth are of all mortals the most miserable; that for them, beyond all men, to issue from the web of existing circumstance is impossible.

He would have renounced his place in the succession without hesitation, had not the man who would come after him been a worthless scamp. Who could, with any conscience or sense of human responsibility, deliver a nation into such hands as those of Tyras? His own, he knew, were weak, but at least they were clean. He did not believe that he would be able to do any good if he became king, because vested interests

would be stronger than he. Ministers would thwart, courtiers conspire, women intrigue; when he would desire to bless he would be forced to curse; between him and the people there would be always the misrepresentations of the Press, or that gross flattery which defiles more than its abuse. He had no illusions; he was no Hercules that he would be able to slay the Hydra; instead, the Hydra would stifle him in feigning to embrace him. Yet he felt that he could not in common courage and decency pass the crown to such a one as the man whose nickname was Gavroche. Nor could he ever do as he would have liked to do, should he ever succeed to the throne—abolish the constitution and the monarchy, and change the country into a republic based not on transatlantic but on ancient precedent. His brothers would most certainly take up arms against him in such an event; there would be civil war in the streets, and in the provinces the land would be delivered over to all the furies. To let Hell loose in such a manner would not be a thing to be thought of for a moment. Therefore if called to the succession he would be compelled by circumstance to enter, and remain in, the groove which he abhorred, to sacrifice his existence to formula, to ceremony, to vain pomp, and to silly shibboleth. A friend had once said to him, ‘Make your personality felt.’ But he knew, he who had been born and reared in a Court, that around every prince, every monarch, there are influences far stronger than his own, which paralyse his influence, intercept its action, and transmute its power into impotence wherever, however, it may cross and menace established claims, precedents, rights, privileges, conventionalities, and customs.

He knew that the Ministers who would kneel to him would be his masters, that their shadows would be always between him and the people ; that, change them as he might, they would be of the same eternal type : their religion, office ; their evangel, a tax-paper. He would be no more able to alter the poverty, the injustice, the agonies of human life in his kingdom than any peasant who dragged bare limbs over scorched sods in the wake of the ploughshare. Individual charity he might give, individual lots he might alleviate ; but to the vast mass of hopeless misery he would be able to give no comfort. The great engines of torture, the great grindstones of pressure, militarism, commerce, taxation, cheap labour, the dropsy of capital, the exploitation of misery ; all these, and all the ills which they engender, he would be no more able to touch than if he were a stevedore labouring in the hold of a steamship in the harbour. The makers of phrases, the grinders of souls, the drivers of hunger, would always be stronger than he. They would leave his multitudes in the death-pits, on the battlefields, in the dens of the sweaters, in the black tunnels of the mines, in the stricken, blighted fields, in the huts without light, or fire, or food ; and he would be powerless to rescue those who would be called his people.

The contrast between a monarch's semblance of dominion and his absolute impotence in reality, seemed to him the most cruel and cynical antithesis the world contained. His father was content with the only real power which royalty confers on royalty—the power of gathering riches, and placing them in safety out of reach of evil chance ; but he would not be so content. Nor would the lesser privileges of authority satisfy

him without the power to alter laws, to divide capital, to reconstruct society, to humanise criminal punishment, to guide the people to the light as it was visible to him ; and what king could do aught of this ? Nay, in modern life, could Krishna, or Christ, or Mahomet, do it ?

Even in the affairs of daily life he was constantly met and checked by an absolute powerlessness to do what he desired for the welfare of the people. Money he could give, and did give ; but there are evils and sorrows which money, magician though it be, cannot cure. If you give money you create a proletariat amongst the poor, and a crowd of toadies amongst those whose god it is ; and you can only give ; you cannot ensure, or even control, the effects of your gift. He knew that well. He could alleviate physical ills indeed, but he could not alter moral ills. He could not follow the course of his gifts any more than a florist can follow the fate of flowers he cuts and sends away to strangers. There was no Poor Law in the country to diminish, however feebly, the suffering of the poor. There was only the tax of the State on the youth of the State : the hateful and almost universal law of conscription which seized from two to three years from the life of nearly every young man born in the kingdom. He felt this most acutely when the lads on his own estates were taken ; he could not save them, he could not ask for any exemption for them ; and they who believed in his omnipotence supposed that he would not help them because he thought the blood-tax just and righteous. He loathed it, but he could no more change it than he could have moved the range of the Rhætian Mountains. If ever he reigned, would the

political parties permit him to abolish compulsory military service? He had no hope of it. The populace would have rejoiced if the weight of arms had been lifted off their sons' shoulders; but the ruling classes would never have allowed a voluntary and paid force to be substituted for the conscripts so numerous, and, by comparison, so cheap. Europe has swept her youth into the dragon's maw of militarism and is not inclined to let them escape. War is the plaything of governments. They are not likely to give it up merely because the playthings get broken.

The favourite place of his uncle Basil had been the great estate called *Ænothrea*, which lay on the south-west coast of *Helianthus* and which was as nearly an earthly paradise as nature and art, land and sea, unlimited wealth and perfect taste, could make it. Its views were incomparable, its treasures were endless, its gardens were dreams of loveliness; and from its terraces the *Mare Magnum* was seen to unroll its mighty waters, an azure plain when summer smiled, a chaos of storm and wind and mountainous waves, and vessels tossed to and fro like cockle-shells in its mad riot, when the clouds touched its purple.

Othyris loved the place with an artist's passion for its beauty, and with the gratitude for its solitude of one who would willingly have been a recluse if life had so permitted. He would gladly have exiled himself for ever to *Ænothrea* and there have dwelt, leaving the clash and clangour of the world to others.

There are so many of these beautiful places, lying in the lap of the world like jewels on a woman's breast, and how seldom—how little—do those who possess them care for them! They may care for them

with the pride of possession, care with the vanity of wealth, care with the sense of the owner's omnipotence, with the appreciation of cultivated taste, with the power and pomp of hospitality ; but care for them with the love of the heart for the home they do not, for they leave them frequently ; when forced to stay in them they are soon weary ; all their glories for the sight, all their treasures for the mind, soon pall on them. If it were not for the charm of sport which their coverts offer, their owners would not sleep as often as they do beneath their roofs ! They prefer the express-trains, the transatlantic steamers, the fashionable spa, the crowded hotel, the gorgeous gambling-place, and even other people's roof-trees to their own ! And the grand houses are left to solitude and servants, sometimes even are let to strangers, sometimes are opened to entertain royalty and provide some great prince with whatever sport he likes the best ; and that is all, until, perchance, some day the owner of one of them is embarrassed in his affairs, and sells—last ignominy of all !

Ænothrea was safe from such a fate ; but it was, perforce, visited too little by its lord, who would so willingly have passed all his days under its roof. The chain of the social, military, filial duties which bound Othyrus to a routine so hateful to him rendered most of his time as heavy to him as the daily labour of any poor man could be. Even when on his estates he had seldom the luxury of solitude, and as he regarded these vast properties as what Tyras called in ridicule *une charge d'âmes*, the welfare of them was to him a grave preoccupation.

*Une charge d'âmes !* Well, was it not so ? Was not the sole excuse for power and possession

the use of them in behalf of those who had neither ? His family thought such a view of rank and property a monstrous compound of communism and conceit, but his conscience held to it.

Only he could do so little which satisfied himself ; he was always stopped in his actions by some of the wire fences of law or usage, some of the immovable rocks of prejudice or regulation. One day as he walked down one of the beautiful avenues at Ænothrea, an avenue of great ilex-trees which met in impenetrable darkness overhead and were bordered by those humble and hardy flowers which he cherished more than all the glories of horticulture, he came across a boy who was employed on the estate. He was a pretty lad, with an innocent face and a classic form ; the tears were falling down his cheeks, and as he stood aside bareheaded to let Othyris pass a sob heaved his chest.

‘Why, my boy, what ails you ?’ asked Elim, knowing the lad by name and sight. ‘Come, Eusebius, do not be shy of me ; tell me your sorrow.’

The boy looked up wistfully.

‘Sir, oh, sir,’ he murmured, ‘I drew a bad number yesterday. I must serve !’

‘Ah ! Is that your trouble ?’ said Othyris, understanding only too well. The boy was bound to go to military service ; very few, indeed, in the rigour of his father’s reign, escaped the iron yoke of conscription.

‘Alas ! my poor child, I can do nothing for you. It is the law. You must obey it.’

Eusebius looked up timidly, his cheeks wet with tears.



‘Oh, sir, oh, my gracious lord,’ he murmured, ‘could you not say a word for me? The others—my brothers—are all so little. They earn nothing, and my father has been ten months helpless since he broke his arm, the bones do not join well——’

Then frightened at having dared to speak so much, he broke down into uncontrollable weeping, and covered his face with his hands.

‘I know, I know!’ said Elim. He knew only too well these sorrows that were all over the land, that overshadowed the lives of the young from their birth, and made bitter as gall the rough, black bread eaten by the hearths of the poor.

‘Oh, sir, your Highness is so mighty in power. If only—if only——’ murmured the boy, trembling in every limb with hope and fear. To him it seemed if only the lord of Ænothrea would speak but a word, they would let him stay in his little home amongst the wide green fields and fragrant woodlands where he had been born.

But Othyris knew otherwise. ‘They found you healthy and well made?’ he said. ‘They have passed you as fitted for service?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Then, my lad, no power of mine can do anything for you.’ And he thought bitterly: ‘It is the best fruit that is first plucked; it is the soundest lamb that is sent first to the slaughter!’

‘Believe me, my boy,’ he said with great gentleness, ‘if it were possible for me to help you, I would do so unasked. But in some things I am entirely powerless, and this is one of them. What I can do is to see that your family does not suffer in your absence, and that your wages are paid to your father

during your absence on military service as though you were still in these gardens. That is all I can do. For the rest, take courage, my child. When you come back your place will await you.'

Then he went on his way down the avenue, and his heart was heavy for the weeping lad. Could he have had his way none of this young flesh would have been eaten by the dragon of war.

He knew how the enforced military service took the elasticity out of youth as the slip and chain cow the young dog ; how it made coarse and harsh and evil those whom it did not make miserable ; how as it hardened the hands and callosities on the feet, so it blunted the sensibilities, killed the individuality, and reduced the man to a machine.

This boy was good, simple, dutiful, affectionate, ignorant of much of the vice and the sin of cities. He would go to the barracks, to the camp, to the chamber with its rows of straw or of sacking for beds, to the drinking booth and the brothel ; and the long forced marches, and the constant gnawing of hunger, and the dreary empty hours without either work or play, and the coarse and brutal bullying of corporal and of comrade, would be his portion for ten long seasons and would make him weary and sullen, and he would get drunk whenever he could.

There was no help for it. Othyrus might have tried to bear the world upon his shoulders with as much chance of success as to change the military tyrannies of Europe.

But as he walked through the soft green shadows of the avenue he seemed to hear the dragging of the young tired feet through the dust over the stones, the heaving of the strained lungs under the heavy leathern

belts, the pressure of the blood on the valves of the heart in the panting march in the noonday sun ;—for many a long year the sons of Helianthus had gone thus over its earth, under its hills, beside its waters, and none had pitied them. The weakest had always dropped out of line, and sunk down on the soil, and swooned or died there.

Who had cared ? No one, except the wolves and wild dogs who had stolen over the sand-hills, or through the cistus bushes, and waited.

## CHAPTER V

HIS EXCELLENCY ALEXANDER DELIORNIS, Minister of Grace and Justice in Helianthus, had been in early life a rag-merchant. He had made a considerable fortune in that unsavoury trade, and had entered on the not much cleaner trade of politics as one of the conservative deputies of his native seaport town, in whose harbours innumerable crafts, of all kinds of construction and degrees of tonnage, and coming from all manner of countries, brought to his yards the rags of innumerable filthy multitudes which, when Helianthus was healthy and medical science was out of work, could always afford to its professors the germs of diseases wherewith to create a useful and profitable scare. Deliornis and the medical scientists had had many transactions ; his warehouses, become in later years vast buildings on the quays, were not dear to the goddess Hygeia ; they had not a sweet fragrance as of the rose ; indeed they stank in the nostrils of the city, and of those who landed and embarked at its port. Hygeia frowned on them ; but the high priests of science hurried to the rescue with sulphates and sublimates, and they and Deliornis agreed that the rags were, if not inodorous, innocuous.

The rags stank on undisturbed, and the useful process of turning them into gold continued un-

molested ; Science, and the Municipality, and Deliornis were all satisfied ; and if Hygeia continued to pout, well, she is, we know, but a minor divinity, and Pluto dislikes her, because she thins the crowds that pass the Styx.

Now, the priests and augurs of Mammon are numerous in the Senate and Chamber of Helianthus ; they may be said to swarm there, like flies in a sugar-barrel ; they are to be found even in under-secretaryships of State, and now and then one or other of them becomes a full-blown Minister, being given, of course, some Department of which he knows absolutely nothing, this condition being an essential rule in the formation of all modern governments. Therefore when Deliornis went to the Chamber, he found on the benches of his party various friends of his friends, and they pushed him with zeal and kindness up the rungs of the ladder of political success ; for the manner in which he had behaved about his warehouses had shown that he possessed the making of an ideal public servant. He was intelligent, supple, pliant in form, tenacious in fact, adroit in speech, unburdened by prejudice or principle. He mounted easily from minor to major positions, and, whenever the aristocratic and conservative party was in power, it could not afford to pass him over with neglect. Delicate nostrils quivered sometimes, detecting the smell of the rags on his gold-laced coat ; but that, of course, was mere fancy on the part of fastidious people who did not appreciate industry.

Deliornis was King John's ideal of a Minister, and the odour of the rag warehouse did not irritate the royal nostrils as it did those of some fastidious persons,

who believed that it could not be got rid of by means of wearing a broad sash ribbon across the chest, or a collar like a prize dog's at the throat. To the King, Deliornis appeared absolutely devoted to the royal House ; without any initiative, or opinions, except such as were suggested from above, *i.e.* by Providence, by Princes, or by the Conservative Press—a triad which is always working in common for the general good of nations and humanity. He was a fluent speaker, an adroit eater of his own words when desirable, and no one was better able to float a scheme for public works, or an addition to the public debt, and persuade an unwilling and sullen Chamber to vote a measure unwelcome to the country, but dear to the Palace and the Bourse.

Deliornis, his personality masked by the names of relatives, had placed much of his gold obtained from rags in international, or national, companies, for the most part manufacturers of destructive engines or of destructive chemicals. Before his present elevation to the rank of a Cabinet Minister, he had been Under-Secretary for Naval Affairs ; and as the present Minister of Marine was a cousin of his own, they could, with pleasant agreement, furnish largely all kinds of murderous substances to the fleet ; and, indeed, the cousin, being a man of talent, provided the maritime ports and dockyard depôts so largely with these that there would be no space for his successors, when they came, to stick in a single shell. New inventions were, indeed, spoken of, which were being discussed and perfected ; but, if it eventually became necessary to adopt them, the present enormous stores could always be sold to small and distant nations, and fresh

purchases made in the name of the Helianthine people ; for this is statecraft as understood in the present days by professional politicians. To buy and sell at a profit has passed from the tradesman's desk to the statesman's portfolio, as the first of all commandments.

The cousin, also, having begun life as a clerk at a county court at a town in a hill district, and from that office having advanced to a chair of political economy at an university, knew considerably less about the water and the vessels which float thereon than any crab which sits in a rock-pool and sees the white sails, and the black smoke, pass in the distance. Therefore in the true spirit of a monarchical democracy he was considered of all men eligible as a Minister of Marine ; and the battleships built under his orders and auspices were certain to topple head over heels at the first squall at sea, and sink like a stone ; as well-behaved battleships, with a due consciousness of the anxiety of their constructors to begin building anew, always do in all oceans, seas, shoals, and channels, in both hemispheres. The shark, the octopus, the narwhal, amongst whose pleasant company their unhappy crews descend in the twilight of deep salt-water, are children in the art of acquisition compared to the dual entity of Cabinet Minister and public contractor.

Something of these methods was undoubtedly known to King John, though not all, nor even a tenth part ; for no monarch, dwelling as monarchs do in hothouses, seeing only the prize plants admitted there, can match in shrewdness a hard-headed tradesman, accustomed to contend with all sorts and conditions of people, and possessing a smart tongue,

a pliant spine, and a brain accustomed to deals and markets and all the variations of speculation. The shrewdness of the tradesman is not the finesse of the statesman, and is apt to resemble the bull in the china-shop when it gets among delicate questions and intricate diplomacies ; but in its own interests and in its own sphere it always remains the master of men who, whatever else may be their faults, have the hampering scruples of gentlemen.

The commercial man, the buyer and seller, the speculator on 'Change, the manufacturer, the intelligent dealer in skins, or manures, or chemicals, cannot make a safe diplomatist towards the middle, or close, of a life spent in other pursuits. Between the professional or commercial mind and manner, and the diplomatic mind and manner, there flow vast impassable streams of rose-water and aromatic vinegar.

But a successful Minister he can make ; we see him on the ministerial benches of all the Parliaments of the world, and he has one superiority over better-bred men : he takes to flunkeyism as naturally as ducks to water. His spine, long bent before rich men, doubles in two before a royal presence ; and for this attribute he is admitted to palaces. For this reason Deliornis had become a *persona grata* at the Soleia ; he agreed with everything, he professed to see profound reason in what was foolishness, and profound insight in what was oblique vision ; he was really penetrated by gratitude when he was treated with cordiality by his Princes, and felt a thrill of pride run down his spine whenever the royal hand touched his own in greeting or valediction. In the Palace he was considered to be of a right and reverend spirit, of remarkably good manners



considering his origin, and of a docile and humble temper, infinitely rare, and as infinitely becoming.

Before the year was aged and its first frosts were felt on the wide Guthonic plains, King John went, as in etiquette bound, to return the visit of his nephew Julius, with a pomp and a costliness which contrasted unpleasantly, in the minds of those persons who were hard to please, with the necessity which the Exchequer was under, of grinding the souls and bodies of the general public between the mill-stones of fiscal extortion. A royal progress is still a very costly thing, although no cloth of gold and pourpoint of satin and collar of lace and corselet of jewels are worn, although all the stately and decorative figures of old are represented by figures totally undistinguishable, when travelling, from commercial clerks or shop-assistants out for a holiday at any seaside or riverside haunt. John of Gunderöde, in a drab-coloured great-coat and a tweed travelling-cap, walked through the banks of palms and flowers with which the railway station of the northern line was decorated, and over the carpet which it is etiquette to spread wherever royal feet may tread; said a few words ungraciously with his Ministers, with the Prefect, the Syndic, and other big officials; then gave them two fingers in farewell, and stepped into his saloon-carriage, accompanied by his son Idumæa, and lighted a huge cheroot.

Every device which modern luxury could devise had been lavished on the royal train. Its upholstery was fit for a young beauty's boudoir, well-known artists had painted its panels with charming groups, sculptors had designed its caryatides and its ceilings,

its temperature was carefully regulated, and its atmosphere was delicately tinted to a soft rose hue ; and King John smoked and slept and snored, and ate and drank, and was borne through meridional and central Europe as swiftly and agreeably as though he were a necromancer sailing through the air on a magic carpet.

His Excellency Alexander Deliornis had been chosen to accompany the King on this official visit, and he was exceedingly elated ; he would, he knew, get some great Order from the Emperor, and the visit would set him firmly in his ministerial saddle, on which he felt at times the unsteadiness of a man who has been sent to the riding-school too late in life. The Prime Minister, Kantakuzene, ought to have gone, and ought to have got the Order, but his republican antecedents made him a person disagreeable to the Emperor of the Guthones ; whereas Deliornis, although he had sold rags, had never shown any tenderness to the classes by whom rags are worn. Like their rags, they stank in his nostrils.

With a stephanotis in his buttonhole, and a gratified smile upon his round, red, full face, the *chiffonnier en gros*, as Tyras called him, awaited his sovereign on the station platform, and followed him with nimble humility into the royal carriage. These are the hours in a politician's life which compensate to him for all the brow-beating in Parliament, the heckling in the Cabinet, the endless stream of applicants pouring in and out of his antechamber, the turning of his coat in the sight of the public, the incessant existence of attack and retreat, of defence and defiance, of asseveration and apology, which make up a political career in Helianthus.

Probably no one enjoys ministerial greatness so thoroughly as an *arrivé* who has been very low down in the social scale. All the fuss and form and ceremony attendant on it bore the aristocrat, offend the taste of the gentleman, but delight the newly arrived; the bowing magistrates, the robed and gilded mayors, the staring crowds, the resounding bands, the verbose greetings, the decorated platforms, the gigantic feasts,—all these enchant the man who has risen from the office-stool to the Cabinet Council; to no other is the red carpet so roseate, or the broad breast-ribbon so dear, or the roar of the cheering such heavenly music.

The royal train had cost some three million of francs; each voyage which it made cost another million; and King John's visit to the empire of his nephew would cost several further millions; and both in his own country and in that of Julius, bundles of cut grass and a handful of hens' eggs were taxed at all the town gates, and both peoples paid a hearth tax, though many of their hearths were cold. What had the cost of his train, and the tax at the gates, or the tax on the hearths, to do one with another, each of these potentates would have asked in amazement if any one had had the hardihood to draw in his hearing such an insufferable comparison.

But from the insolence of such parallels monarchs are carefully screened.

Royal visits have this disadvantage, that if for any cause—a hostile Press, a political rancour, or an individual apprehension on the part of the guest—the exchange of these courtesies be considered unwise or ill-timed, their abandonment causes friction, and creates bad feelings between the nations involved, even as cards not returned, or invitations not accepted,

make enemies in society of those who hitherto have been on terms of amity. It is easy to produce anger ; it is difficult to allay it ; and to efface the recollection of it is almost impossible, even with that giddy thing—a national susceptibility. The kisses of Henry and Francis on the Field of the Cloth of Gold were soon forgotten ; the loss of Calais and the day of Pavia rankled in Tudor and in Valois souls through centuries.

The emotions of nations are like mercury in a glass tube : they rise and fall with incredible rapidity. Both finance and journalism want the quicksilver to dance up and down, or their own occupation would be gone ; so the cold hand or the hot hand presses the tube by turns. Every one wants the temperature which suits himself, and very naturally does his best to produce it.

King John slept and smoked, lunched and dined, bathed and dressed, and was whirled through provinces and countries with scarcely perceptible movement though lightning-like rapidity. Now and then he looked out of a window, and saw long lines of dark forlorn figures stooping over dark stony lands, or groups of factories under clouds of black and lurid smoke, or sluggish grey canals with barges creeping slowly through their slime ; but they had no interest for him. The only sight which interested him was when in a railway siding, waiting for his train to pass, he saw a military train close packed with soldiers and horses, or a crowd of conscripts huddled together on a station platform, or a squadron of cavalry trotting smartly over the dust of a country road.

They were the soldiers, the horses, the con-

scripts, the cavalry, of the various States which acknowledged the suzerainty of his beloved nephew and ally—the nephew of whom he was never sure, the ally who would one day swallow up him and his, if it were possible to do so, by the one law of which he would be unable to dispute the justice : the law of superior strength.

When the monarch entered into the especial dominions of the Lillienstauffen he found the deepest interest in every mile of the iron way. It was his ideal, this State, or conglomeration of States, in which militarism was the law of national life, and mere babes were drilled in the infant schools. It was a model country in his eyes ; its stations were all designed to be used for defence if needed ; its churches were all loopholed to be used for artillery if wanted ; lines of circumvallation and fortification cut across its woods and pastures, and surrounded its old historic towns ; in all its cities, large and small, there were the blare of trumpets, the beat of drums, the clash of arms, the roll of caissons ; the empire of Julius was, before all else, a military country. A cursory glance showed that fact even to any civilian ; to a military scientist like John of Gunderöde it revealed its imposing preparations for war in a thousand ways.

Its roads were all made to serve for the passage of troops ; its bridges over rail and river were all built for military use ; in every little village there were drilling, and trumpeting, and butt shooting ; every factory, mill, and warehouse, every group of farm buildings and school tenements, had its possible utility in war marked upon ordnance maps. He knew that on the frontiers of the Guthonic empire every preparation for offensive and defensive warfare

was carefully made, and he viewed with admiration the immense barracks, and the gigantic fortifications, which studded the land like couchant herds of mammoths.

Many admirers praised Julius for his self-denial in keeping his sword sheathed, and his armed host in unmobilised peacefulness ; but, in truth, he did not go to war because he was not by any means sure of his allies, or certain that his friends would not at the first opportunity become his enemies. Indeed of the latter fact he was quite sure, and it was for that which he prepared.

No dominions in the world were so exclusively dedicated to the possibilities of war as those of Julius. Everything, and every creature, in it was consecrated to preparations for success abroad and at home against foreign foes or native agitators. The nation ate, slept, worked, lived, in a coat of mail, like a man-at-arms of old.

It was thus that the King would have made Helianthus had he but had his way and an unrestricted exchequer. He would have known how to value and to use a dominion like this of his nephew, a nation which allowed itself to be kept ready equipped for war aggression of any kind, and motionless under all maltreatment by its ruler, like the set of tin soldiers which lie side by side in their wooden box till they are taken out and put in line by the hand which disposes of them.

Helianthus was, on the contrary, a country full of legend ; of self-will, of vague remembrance of a great past, remote but glorious ; of irritated discontent with the meagre results of its recent achievements ; it liked its shirt-sleeves, its songs, its bare feet on the

hot turf, its dagger in its sash, its free chatter on the stone bench, its wild dance, when the empty stomach jumped in the air and the hunger of it was forgotten in caper and caress, as the maidens gambolled in the shadows like fawns and kids, while the moon shone down between the vine leaves. The Helianthines were the last people in the world to please a monarch soaked in, and encrusted by, militarism as a salted fish is saturated with brine. He could not run a poker down their backs; he could not make them mute, rigid, mechanical, tight-buttoned, belted, gloved, booted, with eyes fixed, and feet moved like clock-work; they were only awkward and grotesque in that drilled state; put the wild goat in harness, where are its mountain agility and grace?

At the capital city of his empire, Julius, in the uniform of the 6th Helianthine Cuirassiers (for to wear each other's uniforms is a delicate mutual compliment, invented by themselves, which sovereigns never neglect to observe), met him at the central station, and embraced him on both cheeks, and greeted with equal effusion the young Count of Idumæa, whilst his tallest and stoutest giants in towering fur shakoes and glittering corselets made a double living palisade between which his guests passed to their carriages. John of Gunderöde had been unable to show him any such giants as those, and Julius was as proud of them as, in the nursery, a child is proud of having a bigger Noah's ark or taller rocking-horse than any that a small child-visitor possesses at home.

He also shook hands cordially with Delioris, on whose breast he knew that he would have to place on the morrow the great Order of the Eland. The rags

of the Minister's past stank in the nostrils of Julius ; but he ignored them with admirable philosophy. Deliornis was a useful creature to him at the head of foreign affairs in Helios.

'My beloved uncle and revered ally,' Julius called his guest at the banquet-table of that day ; but he took care that the entire course of his revered ally's visit should be a sequence of carefully calculated mortifications. The thorns were all masked by the roses, but they were sharp. The King felt, as his reverential nephew intended him to feel, that there are alliances which closely resemble vassalage, and that Helianthus would never be permitted to become wholly independent of the empire of the Guthones.

He was shown, moreover, how, beside this wonderfully accurate military machinery, so perfect in all its parts, so polished in all its intricacies, so entirely under command, so unfailingly ready in any season and at every hour, his own army, which he had left behind him between the mountains of Rhætia and the Mare Magnum, was but an awkward, rusty, bruised, and halting engine, uncertain in movement and possibly incapable in emergency.

The ropes of fresh laurel swung from one electric lamp to another ; the national colours and the national flowers of the two nations were displayed everywhere, from triumphal arches to buttonholes ; there was all that fictitious enthusiasm which is so easily begotten by the suggestion of the Press and the pressure of the police ; martial music resounded everywhere, and the preachers, who are never mute in the land of the Guthones, preached militant discourses from Christian texts. All was love and unity, readiness for war and solidarity in menace ; and the newspapers of the



world were jubilantly excited, or mournfully envious, according to their geographical situation.

Why serious persons of mature age, and with the cares of public affairs upon them, should be supposed to require amusements and decorations half-childish, half-barbaric ; why they should be supposed to be pleased by gilt pennons, artificial wreaths, clusters of lights imitating bunches of grapes, or statues of plaster draped in silks and satins, it would be difficult for any one to explain ; but these things are the inevitable accompaniment of all visits by the ruler of one country to the capital of another, just as the sale of cheap toys and gingerbread is the accompaniment of every village fair.

The prisons are filled with suspected people crammed into them as a measure of precaution. In the poor quarters there are hunger, darkness, sickness, famine, misery. The thieves laugh at the law and pillage the crowds ; the substratum of the city is still filth, famine, iniquity, vice, suffering ; but the tinsel and the gilding and the banners, and the clusters of electric lights, are all there, and are all that visitors and the reporters see. The beautiful horses prance and plunge ; the postillions crack their ribboned whips ; the massed bands play, the bells vibrate in the air, the cannon boom, and the Powers that Be are delighted, like little boys on a roundabout, with all the noise and stir, and gaudy colour, and gilded pasteboard. And if they want a deeper note in the comic opera, is not the Archbishop of the City there to assure them that they have immortal souls, and are the anointed Vice-Regents of Christ ?

Whether the scene be in Gallia, or Guthonia, or Candor, or Helianthus, or the empire of the Septen-

triones, the spectacle is always the same ; more splendid in some, more tawdry in others ; more cordial or more conventional ; more based on friendship here, or more moved there by fear ; but in substance it is always the same. It serves to dazzle the people ; to daunt them also by the military display which always accompanies it ; and to warn the guest. 'See, my beloved brother-monarch,' says each of those who prepare the spectacle, 'I can be the best of friends, but I can be also the nastiest of foes.' And each royal visitor, smiling, kissing, making pretty speeches, understands what the welcome to him means.

But uneasy lies the head which wears a crown overshadowed by the superior size of another crown ; and when night fell, John of Gunderöde slept ill, although he had the honour of reposing on the same couch which had once been pressed by the revered limbs of the great Gunther of Lillienstauffen, famous as the Ruler of the Iron Hand.

The iron entered into the soul of King John with everything he saw and heard in the Guthonic capital. The perfection of all routine ; the precision of every movement ; the exactitude of every detail ; the matchless manner in which all the interests of the nation were subordinated to the military interest ; the perpetual saluting ; the manner of course with which the officer treated the civilian as a mixture of ape and ass, jostled him off the curbstone, kicked him off the tram-car, upset him off a chair at a café, and spitted him with a sword as a naturalist runs a pin through an insect—all this was hopelessly unattainable in Helianthus. The way in which Julius swept through the street-crowds on his motor-car as Juggernaut rolls over prostrate multitudes could not

have been imitated by his uncle in Helios, where the people, timid and submissive in much, had in them old instincts of free and heroic races which it was dangerous to risk arousing. The aspect of the capital of Julius, which resembled a huge brick barracks, lent itself to an admixture of prison and exercising-ground to which the capital of Helianthus could no more attain than a flower-garden can look like a penitentiary. The very light in Helios laughed like a saucy child, smiled like a happy maiden ; whereas the capital of the Guthones was a vast mass of stone and brick and iron, with cold mists sweeping over it from distant seas that were frozen half the year and from plains surrounding it which were scorched like deserts the other half ; and its population was armed and drilled and thrashed and put in irons whenever their rulers desired. But it was the ideal State of John of Gunderöde, and he laboured incessantly to make his own realm resemble it ; but he had inferior material to work on, and he felt the inferiority bitterly. The Helianthines had been a polished, learned, and artistic race when the Guthones had been little more than orang-utangs in their fir forests and their airy plains, wearing the skins of wild beasts they killed and eating their flesh ; but now the former was a worn-out race in the eyes of the man who ruled over them, and the latter were in his esteem the perfection of drilled, armed, and scientifically-educated humanity. But he could no more make a Helianthine into a Guthone than he could make a lyre-bird into a barn-door fowl ; and the impossibility made him savage.

## CHAPTER VI

ON his return to his capital, King John, inspired by his nephew, sent the Crown Prince on a visit of State to a part of his dominions named in the pages of Herodotus, as in the columns of Baedeker ; the most ancient, poetic, unaltered, and lovely of all the various outlying portions of Helianthus. It consists of a hundred isles, or more : some large, some small, some inhabited, some left solely to the birds of sea and land, to the hares, the wild cats, the squirrels, the moles, the porcupines ; some few are rocky and barren crags, but almost all are densely wooded and extremely beautiful and romantic. To scholars they are known by their ancient name, the Isles of Adonis, and in much they remain untouched since the days of the worship of Aphrodite. They form a series of sentinels between the mainland and the open sea ; but they also constitute a danger to the country, because they are coveted by all neighbouring nations and have been captured and retaken many a time since the Persian, the Carthaginian, the Ottoman fleets sailed through their channels. The visit to them of the Heir-Apparent was a State visit, designed to show the interest which the Crown and Cabinet took in these outlying but precious possessions. But there were two motives beneath this : one was the desire to know

in what degree, for defence or defiance, they were already prepared ; the other was to ascertain their possible value for speculation. The first mission, open and announced, was that of the Heir-Apparent ; the second, only spoken of *sub rosa*, was that of the Minister of Marine who accompanied him ; the Minister who was a cousin of Deliornis. Theo had a militant soul, not a commercial one ; and he was, after his own narrow and vain fashion, an honest man. The King was more modern than he in this respect.

Elim, who knew well these waters and these isles, would have been far more popular and decorative, had he been sent on such an errand. But the King knew the affection which the maritime population everywhere in Helianthus felt for his second son, who loved the sea and seafaring men, and admired these islanders, who were at once so classic and so primitive.

To give them such a chance of offering their favourite a public ovation was the last thing in the monarch's thoughts. He knew that Theo was disliked ; was ungracious, stiff-necked, and harsh ; but as he himself was so likewise, he did not perceive the mischief these defects might do. Monarchs and princes who were amiable and smiling on public occasions, seemed to him like cabmen who should give their horses sugar instead of the whip. The passage in history which seemed to him the most discreditable was that which records how Louis Quatorze took off his plumed hat to his gardener. Theo was not likely to err by any similar excess of urbanity.

The Crown Prince, therefore, was not the man for

this kind of errand ; he was not gracious or good-natured ; his personality was not attractive ; he had his father's harsh and hard expression, and the general aspect of a major of an infantry regiment ; he put more militarism into a frock coat and a tall hat than any other man into a full-dress uniform.

The archipelago was little altered since the days when the altars of Venus had risen amongst the myrtle and oleanders. It was a feast of beauty for the eyes, of perfume for the nostrils ; the islets seemed to float on the waves as swans' nests on the sedges ; the rose of dawn bathed them in its warmth and light ; a poet should have reigned there, a Catullus or a Shelley should have dreamed his life away in its paradise ; on their rocks and in their shallows the sea-flowers of the dianthus and the *gemmae* shone like jewels, and the white flowers of the acacias dropped into the white surf of its breakers. To change the sparkling sand into coal dust and slag ; to fell the acacias, the laburnums, the araucarias, the ilexes to feed the ever-open maws of factory furnaces ; to make the heavy columns of black smoke obscure the atmosphere and hide from view the radiant horizon—this seemed to the Crown Prince and those of his views and epoch an utilitarian work of the first and most worthy order. It would take much time, no doubt, and an enormous expenditure of money, but then what a noble work it would be—almost equal to the black country of Candor or to the oil regions of the great vast West ! The isles were an ode of Anacreon ; they should become a conspicuous feature in the Share List.

The Crown Prince saw a great mercantile centre planted like a Buddha amongst avarice, amid its own

clouds of dust and smoke ; and the trees would burn in the ovens, and the waters be oily and greasy and black, and the people would sweat and suffer just as in the most prosperous regions of the new world. Theo, though a prince, was extremely modern ; for he was a man of his time. He cared nothing for the flamingo poised like a rose and white lily amongst the reeds ; or for the honeysuckle and clematis throwing graceful sprays from tree to tree ; or for the radiant fish darting through the translucent waters of the rock-pools ; or for the nude and gleeful children leaping through the foam, and plunging headlong down the roaring breakers. Here was a multitude of islets, which artists admired and historians talked of, but which otherwise had no more value than the mesembryanthemum on its ledge of surf-washed rock. What could be more patriotic than to change it into an ocean Manchester, a nautical Pittsburg ? He was by no means an imaginative man, but as his steam-pinnace raced between the isles, he instinctively began to compose the opening lines of a prospectus.

Elim would have been in a congenial atmosphere in these isles ; he would have been far more intelligent, far more sympathetic, far more distinguished ; but a second son has not the same prestige as the Heir-Apparent, and his already widespread popularity, joined as it was to his extreme and unorthodox opinions, made him unsafe in the King's estimation. Who knew what he would not say to the people of the Isles, well-known as those people had been for many ages for their maritime daring, for their insubordinate disposition, and, of later times, for their conspicuous part in the War of Independence ? Theo, on the contrary, stamped out free and individual

opinions wherever he went, as a mastiff may stamp on glow-worms.

For the King had not wanted an Anacreontic or Tibullian ode ; he had wanted a report for a parliamentary committee, a cut-and-dried array of figures for a future Board of Green Cloth, and these he obtained from his Heir-Apparent, though it hurt the conscience of the Crown Prince to limit himself to arithmetic, and nautical mathematics, and statements of soundings, and statistics of exports, without expressing the sense of shame which he felt that any part of his father's dominions should be in so morally benighted yet singularly contented a state.

King John, when it was expedient, could dismiss morality as an unimportant item. To his eldest son morality always ranked before anything else—except indeed privilege, and the Brahminic holiness of his caste.

But he was sent to cement unity, and to uphold prestige, with an imposing escort of men-of-war. The cost to the country of the cruise would be considerable, but no one thought about that ; even if the expenditure were large, it would be easily covered by an extra fraction upon hemp or flax, or upon corn or maize or other article of food chiefly used by the poor. Additional taxation was easy in Helianthus to those who imposed the taxes ; it was based, as indeed it is in all countries, on two simple rules : where the shoe pinches already, pinch again, and squeeze those throats which are already safely aphonic. A great deal may be added to the Exchequer by adhering to these simple rules ; there is no disturbance, and the superior classes are left unruffled. And in all countries it is these classes which most require to be



conciliated ; the classes which a government cannot shoot, cannot put in the lock-up, cannot charge with seditious conduct, cannot send to pick oakum or make wooden pegs, but which, on the other hand, can, rising from their dinner-tables and feeling pleasantly warmed with good wines, turn out the Ministry.

So the Crown Prince sped on his way, quite sure that the bill for his wanderings would be paid without any unseemly squabbling over it in either House ; and Tyras drew caricatures of him as droll as anything ever drawn by Caran d'Ache. Meantime Europe discussed excitedly the probabilities that a cession of some of the isles was intended to some other Power, or else that some other isles lying outside the archipelago were to be annexed and included in it ; or else that it was intended to cede the whole archipelago to an international syndicate, which would work the mines, fell the forests, clear the flowery wilderness, build towns of corrugated iron, make heaps of slag and cinders where now orchids bloomed and wild camelias towered, and do the general work of international syndicates everywhere.

The Crown Prince, however, did not go upon such an errand, though the vision of such a syndicate for the future certainly floated seductively before the minds of the King and his Ministers. He went harmlessly on an errand of what is called in vulgar English, brag : a perfectly natural and innocent flourish of trumpets in the name and the interests of the nation, such as good and patriotic princes are sent upon by their government in all States of the world, gathering popularity and sowing prestige.

He took his departure from the harbour of Helios with much display of bunting, roar of powder, applause

of loafing crowds ; he was on board the largest royal steam-yacht, and was accompanied by various ships of war, from the huge and hideous *Polyphemus* to the last new miniature destroyer, *Hecate*.

The Hundred Isles—the Isles of Adonis—were in the south-eastern waters of the Mare Magnum, and their population was Oriental in its habits rather than European ; the Argonauts must have threaded their labyrinth, and Theseus have sailed on their waters ; the Liberalia must have been held on their golden sands, and the Floralia under their clematis-hung trees. It was a shocking blemish to the State in Theo's eyes that there should be such a set of semi-savages on the coast of Helianthus. That they were admirably made, classically graceful, naturally gay as young dogs, and as good-natured, and that they had probably retained unchanged the morals and the manners of twice a thousand years before, was nothing in the estimation of their royal visitor, except a lamentable survival of indecent paganism. They revolted him, as did nude statues in the galleries of the Soleia or the museums of the city.

The people of the Hundred Isles certainly did not lend themselves very harmoniously to the spectacle ; on most of the beautiful, sea-rocked, separate worlds of fruit and flower and fern, of silver sand, and deep, soft, shadows, and red rocks, and creeks changeful in hue as opals, the people were half-barbaric, wholly classic still, mirthful, wild, and ignorant of all outside their isolated homes ; lithe, handsome, brown, half-naked, as little fed as clothed, but well-grown and healthy from the freshness of the air, the freedom of their lives, and the tonic of the salt water in which half their time was spent. The inhabitants of the Isles

could never be thoroughly broken in to military discipline. Their youths were sent by force to the navy, where they made brave sailors, but were restive under coercion, and passed half their time in chains.

These semi-nude, amphibious sons of the surf and the sand were a race that shocked Theo in his innermost feelings of propriety and correctness. But an official posse of decorators had preceded him, as the upholsterer and the florist and the manager prepare a royal box at the Opera House before some great gala visit of crowned heads. Persons from the larger isles, which were somewhat more civilised, were temporarily deported to the smaller isles to leaven their barbarism ; deputations were formed on the approved modern model, addresses composed and presented, presents prepared and received, the leaven from the mainland was sedulously worked into the original, oceanic, primitive conditions ; great care was taken that the young mothers with children at boldly-bared breasts, that the little lads and lasses dancing naked in the surf, that the men leaping and wrestling like statues of pale bronze, unchanged in shape and habit since the days of Phidias, should be kept to the green gloom of their native woods, and all, or almost all, that the Crown Prince should see should be the orthodox broad-cloth, the modern trouser, the silk hat, the shaven chin, the starched shirt, the national flag, the striped marquee, the consecrated red carpet,—everything, indeed, that royal personages seem to create with their breath wherever they go, as the insignia of civilisation, and will expect to find ready for them likewise in the moon if a flying machine ever take them there.

Of the true Isles and life of the Islanders Theo was allowed to see but little. But what he did really see for himself, with his sharp soldier's eyes, and without instruction from any one, in addition to the heathenish habits which horrified him, was that the Hundred Isles were almost utterly defenceless: that they constituted an ever-open gate, through which any enemy could pass into the home waters of Helianthus, and assail her fertile and accessible southern mainland, which had scarcely changed since two thousand years before.

Of course a portion of the fleet always guarded this channel, where the last of the isles marked the juncture of the archipelago with the high seas. But Theo had a soldier's incredulity as to the use and power of a fleet, unsupported by land forces, to protect a country from invasion; and he concluded at once that what was needed was a line of sea-walls, and strong additional fortifications at intervals, in various places, heavily armoured and armed, which should be able to prevent any seizure by a *coup de main* of the most distant Isles. He came also to the conclusion that all the maps and plans of the archipelago already existing in the War Office and the Admiralty in Helios were defective and misleading. He returned to the capital with the determination to make the nation spend many millions on the necessary works of survey and defence; and the King was never averse to expenditure, if he himself were not asked to contribute to it.

The fortifications of the archipelago became immediately the burning question of the day. All the military and conservative party sided with the Crown Prince, and of course all the radical and socialistic

party rushed into opposition of the project ; neither party wasting either time or trouble in looking into the question as it stood on its own merits. This is the characteristic modern fashion of dealing with all public problems ; and it has at least simplicity to recommend it. Does X. favour a project ? That is enough. X.X. immediately goes against it, tooth and nail. Does X. oppose it ? Then, incontinently, X.X. proclaims that it is the one measure imperatively necessary to the national existence. This is called, in monarchies, 'Government by Parliamentary Representation,' and in republics is entitled 'Government by the Will of the People.' Both these names sound nicely ; but what they describe is not quite so nice as to be entirely satisfactory to students of modern history. Nor will they be so to the Gibbons, Tocquevilles, and Rankes of the future, who may very possibly irreverently call it government by interest, caste, temper, envy, greed, hatred, and all uncharitableness ; government, indeed, by the purse and the passions of humanity, instead of by its reason and its justice.

The project of the fortifications had one result which was good, and one result which was either good or bad according to the views of those who judged it. The first was that the scheme occupied the Crown Prince to the temporary exclusion of all other interests ; the second was that it made the Ministry unpopular. Theo ceased temporarily to worry the life out of his aides-de-camp and his tormented colonels, and his poor soldiers slept in comfort for a time in their barracks, their dormitories being for once in a while undisturbed by bugle-calls of alarm in the small hours of the night ; and the

Ministry, being forced, to please the King, to prepare and put forward plans which proposed the expenditure of several trillions of francs, to be necessarily followed by additional taxation, played its best cards into the hands of vigilant and merciless opponents, and lost them. For the best card of the Prime Minister, Kantakuzene, was that which, though in part mere policy, was also in part a genuine desire in him to better the conditions and lighten the burdens of the poor of his nation. The general belief that he was sincere in this had made him popular with the people, even with those sections which condemned him as a turn-coat, and considered that, in view of his earlier life and professions of faith, he should never have become a Minister of the Crown. But when he and his Cabinet fathered so monstrous a proposal of expenditure as the sea and island fortifications, his best friends were aghast, and his defeat was assured.

Viewed merely from a technical point of view, the project was sound. In an epoch when fair-faced Peace sinks under the weight of her armour, and scowls like a Medusa at her neighbours, it is undoubtedly wise for a nation to arm everywhere and in every way. No one can be the first to disarm, under penalty of being the first to fall ; or, at least, such is the opinion alike of soldiers and of sages, and of those youngest sons of Athena, newspaper correspondents.

There was also not a doubt that the sea-washed chain of the Hundred Isles was, as it had been for so many centuries, one of the fairest and most attractive portions of the globe, and as a possession was desired by all. Hitherto, indeed, precisely because it was coveted by all, it had been safe from any one ravisher

in especial. They all cried 'Hands off!' to each other ; and it was felt that the terrible bugbear and Jack-in-the-Box, called an European war, would inevitably follow any attempt on the part of any single Power to trouble the peace of the Helianthine Archipelago. But who could say how long this suspension of hostilities might last ?

'I am always reluctant to give any expression of my views on subjects which are before Parliament,' said Othyris to a friend, who pressed him to give his opinion on the matter, 'and this is in especial my eldest brother's project. But I fear that we are doing what every nation does at this time of the world's history—trusting for defence to money, stone, metal, and projectiles, whilst we enfeeble the temper and the spirit of the people without whom those defences are useless. It is impossible that you can incessantly hustle and worry and unnerve a populace with innumerable by-laws, fines, threats, and taxes, and leave them a spirited and dauntless community. The tyrannical minutiae of modern government, of municipal activity, of police supervision, of medical regulations, of house-to-house espionage, of perpetual interrogation, investigation, and interference, must cow a populace ; its effect is the same on men as that of the muzzle on dogs. Until now the population of the Isles has been let alone in a great measure. They have been allowed to rule themselves to a large extent, taxation and conscription apart. They are primitive, not ungente, but wild and little touched by the life and laws of the mainland. They form the best ægis to the archipelago. I do not think they will willingly be shut up within sea-walls and fortresses, or easily be forced

to congregate in little walled coast towns. Their origin is, I believe, Phœnician. They are children of the sun, and the waves, and the storm. They shout and chant as they ride the white horses of the surf. They dive down to the coral reefs, and climb the stems of the palms to the crowns. They would fight till the sea ran red against invading foes ; but shut up behind mortised blocks of stone they will grow either sullen and savage, or anæmic and tuberculous. My brother sees his fortifications and nothing else ; but the men who come behind him, to carry out his plans, see their mills, their mines, their million-volt power-stations, their huge barracks full of workers grinding gold for them ; and as behind the soldier struts the engineer, so behind the engineer stalks the syndicate, and the archipelago will become what Bombay has become—one vast factory. My brother is entirely sincere, he is perfectly single-minded ; he would no more carry two minds than he would wear two sabres. But those behind him are neither simple-minded nor single-minded, and they use him to their own ends. They have one sole intention—to make money ; and he is one of the mints in which they coin it. He has no idea whatever that he is being used as a mere tool by projectors, contractors, financiers, and all the rest of the gang : he honestly believes that he is doing a patriotic act, and endeavouring to strengthen the country where she is weakest and most vulnerable. He looks forward to an honest and useful expenditure of subscriptions voluntarily given by the nation. He does not as yet imagine, and (if he ever comes to know it) he will never admit, that he will be only made the decorative handle to a gigantic job.'



The Crown Prince was, indeed, primarily occupied with the moral side of the question, being a person to whom moral questions were, as they were to his cousin Julius, directly delegated by Heavenly Powers for observation and enforcement upon the nation. But almost equally precious and important to him was the necessity of losing no time in putting in a state of defence these romantic isles and islets which ran out into the open sea like children racing in the waves. He really scarcely knew which was the more horrible of the two, the open sensuality of the people, or the open peril of these undefended and scattered places on which they dwelt. He, indeed, on his return to the capital, did not any longer conceal the horror which he had felt at the moral condition of the Islands; however discreetly it had been veiled from him, he had seen much which seemed to him the nudest paganism.

‘Their sexual intercourse is often promiscuous,’ he said, in an awed whisper of horror, when he returned to the capital.

‘And our houses of ill-fame,’ said Othyris, ‘what are they?’

Theo did not reply.

There were many offences in his generation, in his country, in his barracks, in his military colleges, which he could neither alter nor chastise, and which he preferred to ignore.

The greatest martinet must be content to ignore sometimes; he cannot always be sitting on court-martial.

Whitewash, religion, and legal marriage appeared to him to be urgently required in these sea-rocked nests of immorality. The long, low, wooden houses,

thatched with sea-rushes, and covered by creepers, were hotbeds of vice and of sin in his eyes. Square sanitary dwellings, built of brick and stuccoed, roofed by tiles or slates, with fireproof floors, patent kitcheners, sinks, safes, and water-pipes, with the surrounding trees well cleared away on all sides of each habitation, would make of the Island-population who should inhabit them a wholly different kind of people. It would take time ; no doubt it would take time ; but such changes were absolutely necessary. The people would rebel, no doubt ; had they not rebelled in Helios when the rookeries of the old quarters had been broken up and cleared away ? Was not, unto this very day, the law of decency, which forbade the bathing in the sea at Helios of persons without bathing-clothes, resisted violently by many people, even by people who were otherwise respectable ?

The advice of Herbert Spencer, 'Govern me as little as you can,' was the opposite of Theo's rule of conduct and of wisdom. To govern the public in every small matter, in every insignificant trifle, was his ideal of good government. He had once with his own august lips ordered a cottager to turn a cat and her kittens off a child's bed one day when he had looked in at a cottage doorway as he waited for a village smith to replace a lost nail in one of his horse's shoes.

'Cats are subject to many contagious diseases, contact with them is most perilous,' he had observed ; and, terrible to relate, the cottager, who did not know who the visitor was, had bawled at him : 'The child and the cat have slept together five mortal years, and you gentry had better not come meddling here'—a reply which led to a domiciliary visit from the

police of the nearest station, and the ejection of the man by his employer from the farm on which he worked.

Theo certainly had intended no such results to the family when he made his remark about the antehygienic properties of the feline race; and he had never given another thought to either the cat or its owner after he had bidden one of his gentlemen acquaint the Syndic of the district that a certain labourer in a certain place appeared to be a person who required some admonition in regard to his want of respect and of cleanliness. But a hint to an official mind against a man who is of no account and is always in arrears with his hearth-tax, is like a hot cigar-end thrown into a heap of dry maize stalks. It flames alight and consumes everything the flame can reach, until there is nothing left except a little charred ash on a burnt piece of ground.

Theo never gave another thought to the insolent cottager, but his suggestion to the Syndic bore fruit.

A man does not like interference in his own house.

A man is rough with his tongue.

A man is slow in paying the sum called, so sympathetically, the hearth-tax.

A man harbours the subversive and intolerable belief that on his own mud floor, between his four wattled walls, he is master.

To the official or bureaucratic mind all these beliefs are of a damnable iniquity, seed of all poison and peril. They are, to that mind, the root of all evil, and to hunt them down and stamp them out is a religious duty, as the burning of heretics was to the Inquisition.

‘Kill the cat,’ said his wife. ‘She’s been our curse.’

‘No,’ said the man, ‘she is a good cat. She has fed with us, and she shall starve with us, since starve we must.’

‘She will get mice for herself,’ said the wife.

‘Not here,’ said the man. ‘Mice run away from a cold hearth and an empty platter. They are just like human-folks.’

The cat found mice in the fields, but the man did not find work there. The farmers were shy of a labourer who had been visited by the police from the town, and who had incurred the displeasure of a high personage. The country round was sparsely populated; the land was poor, the landowners were poor, the harvests were poor; it was a part of the eastern provinces. There were at all times more workers on the soil than there was work to give them. Moreover, when you can only do a humble kind of work, which many can do as well as you and many others can do better, you can create no demand for yourself, you are quickly replaced, no one wants you. If you are pushed out of the one groove in which you have always run, you will be as helpless as an engine lying on its side at the bottom of an embankment. This man, out of work, grew desperate. He begged on the roads. He even threatened those he met. His wife was in her seventh month with her fourth child. The owner of the cottage turned them out of it, and kept the little furniture they had in the place for rent which was overdue. Misery never visits you by herself: she always brings a tribe of followers.

They slept under stacks of cut wood on a moor.

This was vagabondage according to the law. The man was taken up by the rural guards, who had a black cross against his name. The woman was left half-dead, with a still-born babe ; her couch was the rough turf. The little children wandered over the moor to try and find something to eat on bush or briar. They lost themselves, and were discovered by a shepherd days afterwards, their bodies and limbs cleaned of their flesh by birds of prey. When the man was let out of prison he had no longer either wife or children ; he had neither home nor work ; he lost his mind and became violent ; the authorities had him removed to a lunatic asylum. What becomes of poor friendless men who pass such gates no one ever knows ; all that is certain is that they leave all hope behind them, and are as completely blotted out from memory as the dead who lie nameless under sand or sod.

It was, perhaps, almost an excessive punishment for having been rude to a prince about a cat.

## CHAPTER VII

IT is an established theory with royalties that their families must always be in movement, circulating like the gold at a roulette table. Accordingly, in the early spring of the following year, another royal train was running across one of the most northern and mountainous provinces of Helianthus ; a region overshadowed by the range of the Rhætian Alps, and swept by their storms and snows. A line of railway had been driven across it, up its slopes, along its ravines, under its forests, through its gorges, and was a part of the direct route which led to the old Emperor Gregory's dominions, where the aged Cæsar's ninety-seventh birthday was about to be celebrated with all the pomp and rejoicing possible on such occasions.

It was a dangerous line, because the strength of the floods in winter, the frequency of landslips on the hills, the suddenness with which huge rocks were loosened by snow melting in spring and were hurled down on to the metal rails, all combined with the boisterousness of the rivers, and the ferocity of the hill-population, to render the passage of a royal train at all times a thing to be environed with constant and minute precautions. The people living in the desolate villages, in huts which clung to the stone

ledges of the rocks like swallows' nests, or in moss-grown lairs under the pine woods like wolves, had been known, in their hatred of the railway, to roll great blocks of gneiss across the rails, or to fire their rude carbines at the engine-driver or the passengers. Therefore when a train carried members of the imperial family to the Gunderöde, or members of the Gunderöde family to their imperial relatives, the whole permanent way was alive with officials and workmen on the watch for danger.

'Are we worth all that?' said Othyris, who was, with his brother Gavroche, the object of this train's especial journey, as he saw guards and operatives patrolling the lofty bridges and the narrow ledges of one of the mountain gorges through which they passed. 'If all this be necessary to save us from an accident, why is it not done every day? The life of any other passenger is worth as much to him as ours to us.'

'But it is to the nation that ours is so precious!' said Tyras, with his worst grin.

'Pshaw!' said Othyris.

'The dear stupid ass of a nation!' said Gavroche. 'It is so sweet of it to set our lives so high above its own! And it is very comfortable to journey along like this, with thousands of guardian angels on the look out for us, like the English poet's little cherub that sits up aloft to watch over the life of poor Jack.'

'But there is no cherub for poor Jack when he goes by this line; and if he crashes into petroleum waggons, or gets buried under boulders, or is crushed into pulp by a goods train, who cares?'

'Why do you want to be crushed?'

‘I do not want to be crushed, but neither do the travellers of every day in ordinary trains; and if these precautions are needed for us, similar precautions should be taken for them. And they are not taken.’

‘Of course they are not taken. Where would the shareholders’ dividends be? This is a superb line in its engineering, but the promoters went bankrupt, you remember, and Max Vreiheiden got it for next to nothing. It is he who runs it, and he is not the sort of man to keep the guardian angels all along the road for everyday travellers.’

‘Yes: every mile of the line is being sentinelled, sounded, looked over, strengthened, cleared, guarded for us—for us alone. Look at those men running along that ledge; there is scarcely space for a cat to pass safely; a slip of the foot, and one of them will be hurled into the torrent; yet they are risking their lives for us—at how much a day, I wonder? Enough to buy a maize loaf, a curd cheese, and a little tobacco?’

‘That is their business! I have heard that when this line was made, a good many hundreds of workmen were killed in making it; so the droves of slaves were killed in building the Pyramids. Only we call them “operatives,” to sound pretty, and make believe that theirs is all free labour. Of course I know the injustice of the thing as well as you do, only I approve of it, and I like to have all these ants running about, above there, to tap the rocks and make sure that a loose one won’t come toppling down in our path. They are a kind of visible Providence, which is comfortable to ourselves and reassuring to the insurance offices. Even the clergy think that Providence is not quite to be trusted



alone ! Well, you don't quarrel with that, do you ? It's privilege.'

'I quarrel with all privilege.'

'O Lord ! Privilege is the rock of ages. If that went, where should we be ?'

'Wherever our qualities and our deserts would put us.'

Tyras gave a dissentient grunt. He had an uncomfortable impression that his own qualities and deserts would not, alone, entitle him to a glass of absinthe. He had no great opinion of his own order ; but it seemed to him cutting your own throat, if you were a prince yourself, to assume that a prince could possibly be judged by his merits.

Tyras was too intelligent, and too cynically frank, not to confess his own worthlessness ; but that knowledge did not hinder him from the most devout persuasion that any filth he indulged in was an honour to those whom it bespattered, and, alas, for the baseness of human nature, no one contradicted this belief.

'*On triche là haut !*' murmured a gentleman who was once watching the play at a private roulette table where Gavroche was raking his gains in largely ; but the glances, the frowns, the signs of other persons, immediately made this too candid person conscious that all that is seen must not be said : that, in the words of the old maxim, '*Toute vérité n'est pas bonne à dire.*' It was an understood thing in all the good society of Europe that the Prince of Tyras must always be allowed to win at play.

'This train is altogether new,' said Othyris, looking up at its ceiling, painted with the story of Europa. 'It must have cost half a million of francs.'

‘I dare say. Max knows where his bread is buttered. He means the King to make him a duke. Fifteen years ago he was a clerk in one of the public pawn-shops. It was there that he got to know where the shoe pinched on people’s feet. He lent little sums out on pawn-tickets; when they were not paid up in time he took the tickets; that was how he made his first money; sometimes he used to get things worth a great deal for a few copper bits he had lent on them. He’s rather a pleasant fellow, but that is how he began.’

‘Does he lend to you?’ said Othyris curtly.

‘No; he loses to me at cards,’ said Tyras, with one of his suggestive grins.

‘In your own house?’

‘Not yet,’ said Gavroche, who appreciated the question. ‘Theo has him to lunch to-day. But Theo’s motives are immaculate. He wants to float the great Fortification Loan.’

‘There is one comfort,’ said Othyris, ‘Herr Vreiheniden will undoubtedly, eventually, rook you both.’

‘Oh, he’ll take it out of us certainly,’ replied Tyras light-heartedly; ‘and out of the country too!’

The train made a sound like a death-rattle as it ran across one of the lofty bridges of the line which were triumphs of engineering science; beneath it roared the deep, green, foaming waters of a river which, happily for its virgin beauty, was too far from the haunts of men for even engineers to dream of violating it for the use of cities or the purposes of electricity.

Tyras sauntered into the next compartment to get a drink; Othyris was left alone with his own thoughts and the view of the sombre landscape and

the furious tumbling waters. His meditations were as dark as the pine-clothed mountains shutting out the sky. He loathed the egotism of his caste, and he was forced to accept its protection and its provisions. He envied an angler, standing bare-legged on a boulder of rock in the midst of the eddying emerald current.

The Fortification Loan was taken up by Max Vreiheiden, and Max Vreiheiden was lunching with Theo ! Theo, who was supposed to be an honest man and to keep his hands clean !

Max Vreiheiden had seen the light in a poor quarter of the capital of the Guthonic Empire. A mutilation of three fingers of his left hand had spared him the military ordeal. As a boy he had sold daily journals, cheap sweetmeats, wooden toys, or anything else which any one would entrust to him. If he were not always honest in his petty trading, he had at least the adroitness to remember and observe the one necessary commandment 'Thou shalt not be found out' ; he was punctual, zealous, intelligent, obedient, silent ; he had a wonderful capacity for figures, and could do the most complicated sums in his brain. In a word, he was of the stuff of which the modern world makes its leaders ; he would eat any amount of dirt in the service of anybody, provided that the dirt was the washings of a gold-pan. Such a youth is sure to make his way to the front ; more slowly in Europe than in the Americas, but still surely. Before he was thirty-five he was a Colossus of the money-market ; owned provinces, mines, kingdoms, diamond-fields, pearl-fisheries, and many newspapers ; had tens of thousands of Chinese, of negroes, of Kaffirs, of coolies, under his law, in conditions which

were slavery in all except name, and something still worse than slavery ; and meantime had his health drunk at the banquets of Corporations, and his hand shaken by sovereigns. 'My Max could buy all their crowns,' said his little old mother ; and they knew it.

Theo was an honest man, as Gavroche had said ; he had up to the date of his inspection of the Isles of Adonis never been touched by that form of covetousness and unscrupulousness which makes the speculator, whether the speculation be a cocoanut at a fair-affle or a gigantic scheme on the Exchanges of the world. His mind and character were narrow, hard, unreceptive, cramped by prejudice and by privilege, but honourable in their own dull fashion. Yet for the first time some virus of the modern disease of acquisitiveness was instilled into him when he heard and read the prospectus of Max Vreiheiden concerning the Hundred Isles.

He believed sincerely that his patriotism alone moved him in his desire to see the archipelago fortified, and that his decency and enlightenment alone inspired schemes for the civilisation of the picturesque and scandalous Islanders. But he was unconsciously tempted by the golden bait hung out to him. Like most heirs to thrones, the demands on him were much in excess of his means of expenditure. Economical as both he and his wife were, they were almost painfully harassed by the tenuity of their resources ; and to make ends meet was as hard to them at times as to any village shop-keeper or shoemaker.

So Max Vreiheiden lunched with them on this day. And the Crown Princess, who knew all about

him, was not pleased ; although she smiled, as she was ordered to do, and exchanged reminiscences with him of their mutual country, which was once defined by a royal lady, exiled to it by her marriage, as a land of fir-trees and potatoes.

Othyris was roused from his thoughts by the shrill voice of Gavroche.

‘And our venerable Gregory? Has he not enjoyed life ninety odd years? And have not all the good physicians been busy all the world over in brewing serum to put sap into his worn-out trunk? Oh, my good Elim, so long as we can buy men at their own price they will always make life pleasant to us.’

‘Perhaps : but if we be of the type which does not care to buy, or will not stoop to buy them?’

‘Oh, then, we are irreconcilables,’ said Tyras, with his little thin uncanny laugh ; ‘then we are doomed to have a bad time of it from our cradles. There is nothing so diverting as *le marché aux hommes*, and most amusing of all is the persuasion of men that they remain incorruptible, when one has just paid for them body and soul ! But if, like you, we are irreconcilables, who don’t see the fun of the fair, of course it is all lost upon us.’

‘In that sense I am, I confess, an irreconcilable. The baseness of my fellow-creatures does not amuse me.’

‘Then you lose the best part of the eternal *Comédie Humaine*.’

‘I see but little comedy, for over it all—there is death.’

‘Eh, that is the biggest joke of the whole ! All the pother and bother, the cheating and intriguing,

the lying and the toadying, the scrimmage and the scoundrelism of it all, only to end in a handful of ashes, or a shell of wood, after a tale of years not so long as an elephant's when he is allowed to live out his natural life. To see men taking ground-leases for nine hundred and ninety years when their own measure is at most fourscore, is there any droller farce than that? Or the fellow who begins life as a labourer, or a clerk, and by sharpness and gambling in stocks gets to be owner of millions before he is thirty-five, and dies at forty of an aneurism from over-strain, just as he is beginning to lick his lips and enjoy himself? What is that if not the most delicious comedy one can see?'

'My dear Gavroche,' said Othyris, 'whether a theatre amuses one or not, depends more on one's own mood than on the stage one watches. It is so with the theatre of life. It diverts you. It saddens me. You have, I admit, the better part.'

'And yet your liver is sound and mine is spavined!' said Tyras enviously. 'By all the rules of physiology it is you who should laugh and I who should weep.'

'Do you think pity is only born of a bad digestion? It is the pity I feel for men which makes me unable to grin as you do at the sight of their struggles. The other day, at a social congress in the city of London, a speaker gave it as his deliberate opinion that the increase of wages had only led to the increase of drunkenness. Is that not a fact to make even you serious? To me it seems that nothing more sad was ever said. It is true,' he added, with an inflection in his voice which Gavroche understood, 'that it is perhaps still more sad, as it is certainly less excusable,

when a gentleman burns up his viscera with alcohol and kills his brains with absinthe.'

'Damn you !' said Tyras.

'Damn me, certainly, if it please you to do so. But why damn yourself?'

'I enjoy myself. I wallow in the mud ; lots of creatures like to do that ; we have as much right to our mud as you have to your spring-water.'

'What we have a "right" to is very questionable. The rough in the crowd and the prince in the carriage both think they have a right to be maintained by the ratepayers, but I doubt it in either case.'

'Oh, we know you do ; you're an anarchist !'

'I am an anarchist if it be one to find the world in a most disreputable state of carnage and confusion. But I fear I am not even an anarchist, for I do not believe in the heaven-compelling powers of revolvers, or in the goddess Justitia being carried in a bomb. What I do understand, however, is why poor, desperate, and foolish men do think so, especially when they see *un grand de la terre* like the Prince of Tyras wallowing in the mud, which he prefers to spring-water.'

'Damn you !' said Gavroche a second time.

'You are such an imbecile,' he added. 'You have everything you can desire. You are not a Hercules, but you have sound health. You are so good-looking that the women would go mad about you if you were a peasant. You have immense riches, and can do what you like with them. You have talents which are very nearly genius. Yet you enjoy nothing, because you have Hamlet's disease in you : the craze to set a wrong world right, and turn a whirligig of lunatics into an academy of philosophers.'

What the deuce does the world matter to you? You did not make it. Why don't you amuse yourself, and let other men go hang as they please?'

'Why did Hamlet trouble himself about other people's sins? He was not responsible for them.'

'Nor are you responsible for the country's misgovernment, if it be misgoverned. If you were king to-morrow what could you do to make it better governed? Nothing. The whole thing is cut and dried, and unalterable. You have too much brain to believe you could change it. You could not put a fowl into every pot as Henri Quatre wished to do. You could only go on in the groove in which others have gone before you.'

'I am well aware of it! And then you wonder that I am rebellious against fate?'

'I wonder why you kick against the pricks instead of taking the goods the gods give you. Hamlet could have been as happy as a grig if he had liked. But he was Hamlet—unfortunately for himself.'

Othyris smiled.

'O cursed spite,  
That ever I was born to set it right!

'I assure you I have not Hamlet's belief; I do not think I was born to any such high end or aim. But, as I told you, what makes you grin makes me sigh; just as you like brandy and I like hock. There is no accounting for the diversity of tastes, my dear Gavroche. However, I do not think I am like Hamlet. My disease, if it be one, is of a different kind. What weighs on me is the sense of an immense responsibility and of an equally great impotence.'

'Enjoy yourself!'



Othyris was silent.

‘But what will you do when you reign, if you reign?’ Tyras said, seriously for once. ‘A liberal king is a contradiction in terms. A king or an emperor cannot be liberal, because to preserve himself, and what are called the institutions which go with him, he must sanction the shooting and imprisoning of persons who would upset him and the institutions. If you are ever king, either you will have to abolish yourself and disappear, or drop down into the comfortable self-admiration and self-acceptance in which your ancestors have been content to dwell with so much complacency. One or the other you must do.’

‘Do you suppose that the problem you propose as a novelty has not been the torment of my soul ever since I could think the thoughts of a man at all?’ said Othyris, with some impatience. ‘There is one consolation. Theo’s life is a better one than mine.’

‘Physically, perhaps, but he is hated by the people. He is more likely to have a bullet put in him than you are. I wouldn’t count too much on his out-living me, if I were you. Besides, you know, with your views, it is absolutely immoral in you to wish him to live. When he gets into saddle, won’t he use the spurs! The good horse Populus will bleed from both flanks when Theo sits astride on its back.’

Othyris was silent. He knew it only too well. Theo had all his father’s hardness and cruelty, without his father’s cool and shrewd intuitions.

‘Enjoy yourself!’ said Tyras, for a second time. ‘You may worry yourself into tuberculosis, but you will not make anybody or anything any better. Enjoy yourself.’

But to Othyris the power of enjoyment was pressed

out of him by the weight and weariness of his position.

At the frontier Tyras left the royal train to go westward across Europe to that capital of Gallia which was the centre of his chief delights, and where he was known by a *petit nom* more suggestive than complimentary, in society more amusing than correct. Othyris continued his journey northward ; he was sent to represent his father and his family at the celebration of the ninety-seventh birthday of the Emperor Gregory at the greatest city of the great empire of the Septentriones, where frost still held ice-bound all the rivers, and icicles hung from all the roofs, whilst in Helianthus the warmth and the sunshine of early spring was flooding the land with light, and filling the saddest soul with that hopefulness which is born with the renascence of the earth.

He went, unwillingly, on a mission in all ways distasteful to him ; he disliked show, pomp, crowds, publicity ; and he went with especial reluctance, for a parental desire to make him wed his young cousin Xenia was being urged into a formal betrothal.

The vast empire of the Septentriones, over which the Emperor Gregory ruled in undisputed autocracy, was at once Oriental and barbaric, stretching from the ice of frozen seas to the hot sands of parching plains. It was a giant with ponderous mace and mailed fist, and it was a cripple with frost-bitten feet and empty belly ; it was ruled by the whip and the sabre ; and when tens of thousands died of famine on its lands, it let them die : they mattered less than the murrained fields of wheat.

Old Gregory had led an elegant, a joyous, and an accomplished life ; he had been a patron of

the arts, a procreator of many children, a free liver, an amiable gentleman, popular wherever he was seen, with a suave smile and a gracious phrase for all, especially for those who were not his subjects.

His life had been long, prosperous, and little troubled. He was compared by preachers and publicists to Solomon in all his glory and wisdom ; and if his mind were rather that of the *boulevardier*, this condescension in him was only the more affable. He was now crystallised by extreme age into legendary virtue and wisdom, and all the nations vied in doing him honour and admiring his longevity. Longevity, which in the poor is an annoying impertinence, seems in the rich and the royal a kind of condescending talent. His throne was planted on a solid bed of gun-metal, set round with half a million bayonets. Zeus himself could never have been more completely aloof from mortal struggles. Revolution offended him because it was rude, because it was silly, because it was impertinent ; but it was too far away from him really to matter. Blood had run like water in his chief cities many a time ; gangs of young men had been carried in irons out to exile and captivity ; women had been beaten with rods ; unarmed crowds had been mown down by grape-shot, and driven before bayonets ; but all these things had not disturbed him greatly : nay, the sound of the cannonades had seldom even reached his arm-chair at the opera, his tribune at the law meeting, his supper-table, his slumber in a woman's arms. Revolution annoyed him as the grinding of a barrel-organ or the quarrelling of cats may annoy a gentleman sitting in his library reading Horace : no more.

But now the Emperor was very old ; old as Nestor, old as Priam, old as Lear ; his swollen legs had long refused to move ; his chin was sunk upon his breast ; his false teeth rattled and moved when he spoke ; his eyes were very dim, and his skull was as bald as a new-born babe's. Four attendants carried him in a chair contrived with the utmost ingenuity to make his helplessness as little visible as possible. Ninety-seven long years stretched behind him ; and their length had left him little taste or understanding for anything except the pleasures of the table and the amassing of gold, with some little relish still for the adroitness and innuendo of the wit of the Paris boulevards.

The Emperor's chief interest, now, was his white Persian cat, Blanchette, and his sole counsellor was his favourite physician, Seychelles. Wars and rumours of wars had long lost their meaning for him ; he was even indifferent to the state of the Bourses ; the state of his own pulse alone concerned him. When he was wheeled into the room where his Council of State awaited him, he sat with his chin on his chest, sniffing the odorous blossom placed in his buttonhole ; but he neither knew nor cared what decisions were taken round the table.

His sons were all dead, and the oldest of his grandsons, Stephen, the King of Gelum, as his title was as heir to the throne, had reached fifty years of age ; a man very impatient to reign, and grown very grey under the fret and fume of such long waiting.

'Grand-grand-Gri-gris' was the nickname that the numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the old Emperor gave him amongst themselves. They had a sincere veneration for him : he had laid

by so much! He had so much to leave! As a ruler he had been niggard, but for his family he had stored up wealth untold. All the insurance companies of the two hemispheres watched his frail existence with as keen an anxiety as did his descendants, and when he coughed or took a chill, financiers quaked with fear, and his grandsons and great-grandsons thrilled with hope. All the Press of Europe agreed that the preservation of the nonagenarian's existence was the greatest blessing that a merciful Deity could give to a reckless and too thankless mankind; that his existence was indeed the only rein by which the disorderly passions of the nations were held in check; so that his private virtues, like the public uses and greatness of him, will probably pass into a myth, indestructible by criticism, and growing more and more venerable with time.

Such legends die hard; and the legend of the Emperor Gregory's invaluable services to the terrestrial globe is a very tough and tenacious one. Nothing, probably, will ever destroy it, except the publication of secret memoirs after his death; and there will be many and mighty persons interested to suppress these—sufficiently interested, perhaps, to succeed in burning them unpublished.

The national Press always said that the family affection so conspicuous in the imperial line was one of the holiest and most beautiful spectacles which the world could see; but the old Emperor knew better. He was attached to his vast progeny, but he was aware that most of them looked forward impatiently to his decease.

'Leone XIII. is more fortunate than I,' said the great Gregory bitterly once. 'He has none of his

blood, begotten of his loins, who are wishing him in his grave ! ’

However, he who without a qualm would consign thousands of the populations of his cities to the mines, or to the underground cells of fortresses, was weak of will in his family relations, and indulgent to his descendants. They were his ; that sufficed to make them sacred to him ; and his temper in private life was good-humoured and good-natured ; he forgave much to his own blood, nothing to others.

If he had a preference for any one of the hundred and twenty-two descendants by whom he was blessed, he preferred Othyris, who never asked him for anything. All the others were always importuning for something, either for themselves or for their favourites, male or female. But Othyris had never even asked him for the ribbon of an Order for one of his gentlemen.

‘ *C’est un fou,* ’ had the old Cæsar once said of Othyris to King John. ‘ *Mais ma foi ! c’est un fou fort distingué.* ’

‘ *Je vois la folie ; je ne vois pas la distinction !* ’ muttered King John, too low for the Emperor’s aged ears to hear.

Othyris carried with him the presents and congratulations of his father and his family to this celebration of the Emperor’s ninety-seventh year. He occupied one of the finest suites of apartments in the imperial palace. He rode one of the finest chargers of the many fine horses which caracoled before and behind the carriage in which the aged sovereign drove through his capital. He wore his uniform of Colonel of the White Guards of the Septentriones and his Orders of the great Empire of the North. He was

present at all the church services, the addresses, the sacraments, the banquets, the processions, the festivities ; and that aged, bald, stooping, deaf, and purblind man, the centre of all this splendour and pageantry and acclamation, seemed to him a very piteous figure as the salvoes of artillery thundered, and the roar of applauding multitudes rolled through the air of the great city.

‘ It is I who am wrong, perhaps, since everything which pleases others displeases me,’ thought Othyris.

The Father of his People !

The Nestor of Europe !

The Agamemnon of the North !

The Solomon of the Septentriones !

These and many such titles and phrases were emblazoned or embroidered on the banners, and arches, and draperies which floated in the mild, pale air of the days of Pentecost. The crowds were intoxicated with that contagion of emotion which is at once as unreal and as violent as the forces of delirium ; the hysterical passion of suggested feeling, which is at once as true and as false as the laughter or the tears of the drunkard. Women sobbed aloud ; men dashed the tears of joy from their eyes ; little children were lifted up in strong hands and bidden to bless this king of kings ; frail ladies were trampled under foot, nervous minds moved restless limbs to unseemly antics, young girls swooned from emotion, aged people cried and danced in their temporary insanity, many younger people were pushed, bruised, kicked, even killed ; the atmosphere was electric, intoxicating as brandy, teeming with the infusoria of disease, the infectiousness of lunacy,—there was no sense in it, no root in it, no veracity in it, no more

than in the ravings of the sick in a typhoid ward ; but it had all the violence of fever, and all its obstinacy.

‘If he has patience he will have his desires, and be a fetish too in his turn,’ thought Othyris, as he saw the dull and tired eyes of his uncle Stephen fixed upon the crowd, which was surging around and against the six white horses of the old Emperor’s glass coach : the coach which had been made a hundred and fifty years before, and whose beautiful panels represented the triumphs of Alexander. All things come to those who know how to wait ; so at least the proverb affirms, but Stephen was tired of waiting. He was cowed and silenced by long habit and daily pressure, but by nature he was impatient, as the feeble of will often are, and all his life was crumbling away in this weary expectation, this chafing at long delay. Long waiting is good for no one. The sword rusts in the scabbard. The pearl grows yellow in the jewel-case. In his youth Stephen, King of Gelum, had been a man of some fair promise and of many good intentions ; but desire deferred and impotence to act had left him sapless as a hollow tree, bitter as a withered lemon.

The Emperor was greatly fatigued by his public appearance ; it was not until three days later that Othyris was summoned to his presence.

He was reclining in a large low chair ; he was wrapped in a dressing-gown of velvet, lined with sable, for he was always cold, although his palace was kept at the temperature of a hothouse. On his knee was his favourite white cat, Blanchette. He had been a very handsome man in his youth and manhood, and his features, wasted, haggard and wrinkled by extreme old age, were still finely formed,



and had a distant resemblance to the portraits and statues of him in an earlier time.

'*A quand la noce*, Elim?' asked the old man, with a senile chuckle.

Othyris knew to what he alluded, and intimated that no bridal bells were likely to ring for him.

'Humph, humph, you mistake. They will not let you remain celibate,' murmured his great-grandfather. 'Wed Xenia. Wed Xenia. She is an appetising little morsel, and you need not be troubled about her; let her take the bit between her teeth; she will leave you alone.'

But he was still tired from the fatigues of his triumph, and his eyes were closing and his senses growing drowsy; and Blanchette stretched herself, somnolent also, on his knee, and closed her own sea-blue eyes.

Suddenly old Gregory roused himself and looked suspiciously at Othyris, who remained standing before his chair, not having been either dismissed or retained.

'Look you, Elim,' said the old Emperor, 'if you take Xenia, I will dower her well. But in my will I shall leave you nothing; you are so rich through your uncle Basil.'

'You will do me the greatest favour, sir,' said Othyris; and he meant sincerely what he said. 'I have too much as it is.'

'I will leave you Blanchette,' said the old man, stroking his cat's snowy fur.

'She shall be Blanchette *la bienvenue*. Only I cannot answer for the politeness to her of my dogs.'

Old Gregory looked at him sharply through his

glasses, and smiled grimly, showing the gold of his teeth.

‘Any other member of your family would have offered to kill every dog in Helios lest they should molest Blanchette ! After all, perhaps I had better leave her to little Xenia.’

‘They have qualities in common, sir.’

The old man laughed, and his teeth rattled.

‘Blanchette is a democrat ; Xenia is certainly not like her in that respect,’ he answered, stroking her. ‘But democrats are easily tamed by warm rooms, and cream, and ribbons on their breasts.’

He chuckled feebly ; in his far away youth he had been of an acute and satirical humour, and he had often amused himself by playing with his enemies.

‘Blanchette,’ continued the old man, ‘Blanchette has no sense of her position. She is entirely indifferent to her privileges. I have even seen her in one of the inner courts sitting on a scullion’s shoulder : it is shocking, but true. You, Elim, resemble Blanchette.’

‘I do not caress scullions, sir, though doubtless many good youths may be found amongst them.’

‘In theory you do ; in theory. My dear Elim, the deluge will come without you ; there is no need for you to open the sluices and cut the dykes. Your new creeds are very old. Your ideas were held by all the eighteenth century philosophers, and with what end ? The Bourbons were slain and exiled, but the stock returned.’

Othyris was silent. It was as useless to argue with this fossilised mind as to reason with the sculptures in the adjacent gallery ; and in a measure

the old man was right. Of what use was the indignation of a Voltaire? A Calas always exists somewhere or other, is always doomed to a scaffold. Of what use the dreams of a Vergniaud, the theories of the Salons of the Directoire, the visions of an André Chenier, the hopes and ideals of a René, of a Lamartine? They result in Louis Dix-huit, in Louis Philippe, in Louis Napoléon, in Grévy, Faure, Loubet. The blood and the brains of the idealists boil in the cauldron of suffering, congeal in the ice-caverns of death, and out of them there always arise the Philistine and the Prince.

‘Leave your revolutionary fancies and marry little Xenia,’ said the old monarch. ‘You will have many children, and she will send your dogs to the kennels. Xenia is only a saucy, over-grown, impudent child just now, but she has the making in her of a *maîtresse femme*. You want a *maîtresse femme* to take charge of you.’

‘And our children would be tuberculous and scrofulous as the children of the unions of first cousins always are,’ thought Othyris. ‘Pray, sir, excuse me,’ he said aloud. ‘Xenia must make the happiness of some worthier mortal. I am quite incapable of appreciating her.’

‘You mean to disappoint her father and yours?’ the old man asked, with some amusement.

‘I cannot enter into their views for my happiness.’

‘Why not?’

‘For many reasons, sir.’

‘Humph! I think you have only to obey in this matter.’

Othyris was silent; but his features were cold

and did not promise an obedient temperament. The old man looked at him with eyes dim but shrewd.

‘Look you, Elim ; your uncle is a poor creature, but your father is a hard man ; he breaks what opposes him. Give way in this matter. Xenia is *jolie à croquer* ; and if you do not care for her, let her have her head ; she will know how to amuse herself.’

‘That is not my idea of marriage, sir.’

‘Yours is an alliance,’ said the old Emperor significantly.

Othyris was silent.

‘You have no will of your own ; we can break it if you have. ‘We can break it,’ he said, in a shrill screaming voice, being irritated by opposition ; and he struck the floor with his crutch so sharply that Blanchette turned her round blue eyes on him in alarm and skipped down from his knees.

Othyris was still silent.

He was thinking of how many human wills had been broken, like dry canes in a north gale, by that cruel old man whose blood was in his own veins. He was thinking of the gangs of fettered prisoners driven across the barren plains through snow and storm ; of the hordes of poor fanatic peasants exiled, scourged, starved, forced out into the frozen night, and left to perish unpitied under the stars of the extreme north ; of genius, of ideality, of heroism, of self-sacrifice shut down under the casemates of fortresses ; of pregnant women beaten with rods as ripe grain is threshed by flails, the young and generous blood running like the blood of steers and heifers in the conduits of shambles. Yes, they could break the will, no doubt, but only by breaking first the cord of life.

‘ We can break you—break, break, break——’ said the old Emperor in a thin shrieking voice, and he choked in his sudden wrath, and coughed with a gasping, rasping noise in his throat, and rang his gold hand-bell noisily. Seychelles, who was always within hearing, hurried to the rescue ; of all things the most to be dreaded was any excitement, any agitation, at the great age of the great monarch.

The marriage had been decided on between Xenia’s parents and John of Gunderöde ; for no especial reason, and in the usual ignorance which moves royal races to do that which the owners of horses and dogs most carefully avoid, *i.e.* to breed in and in, to perpetually cross and recross the same stock.

His younger sister, the Princess Euphrosyne, was betrothed to the eldest son of Stephen, and it seemed to both families that the union between himself and Xenia would be everything which could be desired.

Sooner, he thought, would he take one of the fisher-girls of the sea villages of the Helianthine coast, with their virginal grace, their goddess-like strength and simplicity, their calm and chaste regard, so like to that of the busts of Artemis.

*Maîtresse femme !*

Yes : little Xenia would be that perhaps in time, but she would first be many other things as well. The sentinels at the palace gates could not keep out the atmosphere of the century.

A little later he joined in the gardens his many cousins, sons and daughters of the heir to the throne, who were playing lawn-tennis in the midst of an admiring circle of lords and ladies in waiting, tutors,

governesses, and the other small fry of a great Court. Xenia was amongst them, sixteen years old, using her racket with skill and decision, as like the Loulou of Gyp as one cherry is like another ; for the tendencies of modern generations penetrate alike the palace and the hovel, subtle as gases, invisible and irresistible as electricity, corroding as acids, blighting youth even whilst it stimulates it, as the heat of the compost forces the flower and withers it.

‘*Savez-vous, beau cousin, vous êtes mon futur ?*’ she said, with impudent challenge in her bright, bold green-grey eyes ; eyes like the ice of her northern seas.

‘*Vraiment ? J’en doute !*’ he answered curtly.

‘*On l’a décidé !*’ she said gaily ; but there was an angry gleam in her impertinent, saucy, malicious gaze.

He did not answer, but sent the ball flying across the net. She was wholly unattractive to him ; she was even repulsive ; this half-grown girl, this *demie-vierge*, with her bold, hard gaze, her cynical provocative smile, her boyish, abrupt address ; the Loulou of Gyp, though an Imperial Highness.

On the morrow he had an interview, which was painful to both, with his uncle Stephen. He stated courteously but inflexibly his resolution not to marry his young cousin ; indeed, not to marry at all. He made the statement as politely as the nature of it allowed, but of necessity it wounded and offended his relative. Stephen was by no means an unamiable man, but he was one with whom circumstance had always been at variance : he had a wife who ruled him, and an old man who treated him contumeliously, a heritage which escaped him like a mirage, and a numerous family of which all the members gave

him constant anxiety. He was the kind of man who, whether he be king or cobbler, is every one's prey ; he was kind, peevish, lavish, niggard, uncertain, unhappy ; his courtiers pillaged him, his wife ridiculed him, his children tormented him, his grandfather terrorised him. He was the ruler that was to be ; meantime every one ruled him.

He pulled off his blue glasses nervously, and beat a tattoo with them on the blotting-pad on the writing-table. The issue of the conversation was full of anxiety for him. He knew John of Gunderöde in every smallest detail of his character. He knew that although a thing might be of no importance whatsoever, yet if the King had once decided on that thing he would never let it go, or alter his decision, even if it should cost a million times its value. He knew that his brother-in-law had the tenacity of the ferret, joined to that obstinate vanity which the human animal alone possesses. There was no crevice of that close-shut mind into which Stephen had not peered ; for he had loved his sister, and had studied profoundly the man who had made her unhappiness. In addition, he had studied his brother-in-law with the keen and harassing interest which the debtor takes in the creditor. He had himself been always poor in comparison with the immensity of his obligatory expenditure, and John of Gunderöde had often rescued him from embarrassments ; but he knew very well that the motive of the rescue had not been one of friendship or kindness, but of that shrewd and unerring self-interest which the King brought into every act, private and public, of his career. And now if this creditor were denied the hand of Xenia, which he coveted for his son

because it was well known that the old monarch would dower her magnificently, the sufferer would be Xenia's unhappy father.

He did not personally care about this marriage ; but his grandfather had desired it, and to dispute the will of the old Emperor seemed to him a Titanic scaling of heaven, certain to draw down chastisement ; his brother-in-law also desired it, and King John was not an agreeable person to thwart. Moreover, it is never flattering to a parent to hear that alliance with his daughter is undesired. He imagined that he saw the illicit influence of the lawless loves of Othyris in this withdrawal of his nephew ; and that supposition tended to make him more offended than he might otherwise have been.

'Surely you owe the King, your father, obedience ?' he said feebly, and with what little dignity he possessed.

Othyris replied :

'I owe the King, my father, obedience, undoubtedly in much ; as a soldier, as a son, as a subject ; but only in some matters, not in all. Marriage or celibacy are matters of private life, of personal choice. My father's rights stop short of my private life, of my personal choice.'

'I cannot admit that,' said his uncle nervously, and in alarm ; 'you would introduce rebellion into the sacred arx of the family.'

'There is one thing more sacred than the family. It is self-respect,' replied Othyris.

'You would imply——'

'Nothing that is offensive. I merely mean that self-respect cannot exist where there is not liberty of opinion and of action in personal matters.'

'Liberty ! The catchword of the *canaille* !'



‘Sometimes. But nevertheless the finest word in human language.’

Stephen looked at him with curiosity through his blue glasses.

‘They accredit you with subversive opinions. Where did you get their infection?’

Othyris smiled slightly.

‘Of my opinions I can say truly that they are my own, borrowed from no man.’

‘There is nothing more dangerous,’ said his uncle, with irritable impatience.

‘Why so?’

‘Because—because—the person who trusts and glories in his own powers of judgment, defies authority and breaks loose from tradition. He becomes a law unto himself.’

‘Exactly.’

‘You think that permissible?’

‘I think it inevitable if a man, whatever be his station, have any respect for himself.’

‘You would destroy religion!’

‘I would destroy superstitions and priesthoods.’

‘You would destroy faith, law, order! It is anarchy! anarchy and chaos!’ said Stephen, with a nervous thrill of horror which shook his whole feeble person. ‘I would trust no daughter of mine to you. Time will temper your folly, no doubt, and show you the error of your ways; but I would not risk the future of my child in such an experiment. Can you be the son of my beloved sister, of my dear and faultless Feodorowna?’

Othyris bowed his head reverently at his mother’s name.

‘Then,’ he said, after a pause, ‘since we are both

of accord, my dear uncle, that I am wholly unworthy of my cousin's hand, we will discuss and disagree no more. I am always your devoted servant and nephew ; and we are both agreed that I could not either deserve, or properly fill, any nearer relation to you.'

Poor Stephen felt that he had blundered stupidly in giving Othyris a chance of withdrawal. What, too, would his wife say ? She also was not easy to reconcile to any departure from her accepted plans. The proposed alliance for her youngest daughter pleased her : she considered, as every one did, that Elim would in all probability succeed eventually to the throne of Helianthus.

'But your father ?' he said, with vacillation and fear. He was keenly afraid of his brother-in-law, in whose coffers lay many of his own signatures.

'When you and I are of accord,' said Othyris, 'my father, however displeased or regretful he may be, will be powerless.'

'Of accord ! You and I are of accord in nothing !'

'In opinion, no ; but concerning my unworthiness of my cousin Xenia's hand, yes.'

The unfortunate King of Gelum felt that he had been checkmated, and that further argument was useless. The younger man had been the more astute.

Othyris went to his sleeping-carriage in the imperial train, which was to take him to the south-east frontier, well content with the issue of the interview.

As the train bore him towards the frontier, he looked at the still frozen plains over which it passed, the snow-laden leaden skies, the miser-

able cabins blocked up and blotted out by the winter's drifts, the starved cattle with bones piercing through their hides, the wretched horses trying to scrape their way to buried roots or mosses or to break the ice of frozen pools and ditches, the peasants dragging driftwood over the snow or digging paths to their churches; and the sharp brutal contrast of this misery with the splendour of the scenes from which he had come, hurt him as with some physical pain. Ninety-seven years of his great-grandfather's life had been passed without the peace and pleasure of the Father of his People having been for an hour disturbed by this contrast, or his conscience ever having been awakened by the knowledge of the ocean of misery rolling over these plains. 'God forgive us!' thought Othyrus; and then even that thought seemed to him a blasphemy. Who could believe in the goodness of a God by whom such contrasts had been created between man and man?

He returned home by sea, his father having given him the mission of a complimentary visit to the Ottoman ruler who was at that moment harrying, burning, pillaging, massacring, in an adjacent Christian semi-Asiatic state, wholly undisturbed by the Christian potentates of the civilised West. His own yacht and two war-vessels awaited him at a southern port. His visit to the Oriental potentate was felicitously concluded, and his homeward voyage was beautiful across the dark foaming inland sea, and past the cypress woods, the ancient monasteries, the minarets fine as lace and lofty as fountains, towards the famous city, lying like a half-moon on the edge of the waters: the city which had been his birthplace.

His schooner, with the frigates which formed her escort on this visit of ceremonial, wound through the narrow channels of the passage which was as a bone amongst dogs to the western Powers, and, entering on the Mare Magnum, in due time he saw the long blue line of the Helianthine hills.

‘My country!’ he murmured, with that pride of possession and humility of filial love, between which the patriot’s affection is divided. But then, he thought, was it in truth *his* country? Were hybrids, such as he and his, truly the sons of any land, with any right to say ‘My race, my tongue, my country?’ Was not the poorest peasant born on that earth, under these olive-trees, by that sea, or on those hills, more really a son of the soil than he, mongrel that he was, with the blood of many nationalities in him, bred in and in, but cross-bred?

Helios was before him, like a silver cup lying in the lap of the calm waters. It was beautiful as a city in a mirage seen by a dying man. But there, on the sea-terraces of the Soleia, paced armed sentinels; on the quays rode armed carabineers; in the streets and lanes city guards hunted beggars and children and dogs; at the gates waited weary and dusty cattle, horses, mules, with their peasant drivers blocked in a mass, one on another, whilst the Octroi officials ransacked, weighed, cursed and bullied; in the dreary factories, with their long lines of windows, multitudes toiled in the joyless, monotonous, mechanical toil with which modern inventions have cursed the workman; in the fortress, with its glorious angel trumpeting to the skies, were a hundred brazen mouths of cannon turned night and day on to the crowded quarters whence revolution might raise her Medusa’s head;

and in its arsenals were closely packed millions on millions of cases of ammunition of the newest and the deadliest sort. Was not Helios in all her beauty like a fair woman with a cancer in her womb?

He was aroused from his meditations by the approach towards his yacht of three barges, occupied by a deputation of welcome from the municipality of the city. Syndic, assessors, councillors, and notabilities were crowded on board them in one of those servile, useless, and senseless ceremonies which dog the steps and poison the lives of princes, and degrade the citizens concerned in them into panders, parrots, and puppets.

‘I am going back to my harness,’ thought Othyris, as he saw the scarlet and gold robes of the Mayor, gorgeous in the sunlight of the gangway. ‘Must you come out to meet me with the bit and the bridle? O garrulous and servile fools! Cannot you spend your time in the innumerable duties which call to you in vain? Go, take your robes, and your scarves, and your vellum, and your froth, and your platitudes, and your protestations elsewhere. Be men, not crawling sycophants!’

He received them with coldness and visible impatience; he replied to their address briefly and with weariness; his own gentlemen were surprised and disquieted, but the deputation did not perceive that they were unwelcome; they were surrounded by the clouds of their own incense, giddy with the gazes of their own self-adoration! Servility is, to the servile, a self-engendered gas which intoxicates. They were enamoured of their own abasement as women are of their own petty vanities. They found delight and honour even in their own humiliation.

His father and his brothers took this form of

sycophancy seriously, as a meet attitude on the part of the public and a correct obeisance to themselves. But Othyris could not do so. To his temperament and opinions, his own manhood was lowered by the abasement of theirs. A common humanity made him feel himself degraded by their miserable servility. They were men well-to-do in the world, well fed, well clothed, well housed, well educated, as education is considered in modern life ; they had no excuse for their own self-chosen degradation, for the wretched self-imposed prostration which they sought with such avidity. It hurt the dignity of his own self-respect to see theirs so debased ; but their hides were so thick, their vision so oblique, their paltry pride so obtuse, that they could not even be taught what self-respect meant.

## CHAPTER VIII

ON the night of Elim's return from his mission, which was the eve of the Feast of the Ascension, a roar as of thunder, but sounding duller and slower as it smote the ear, startled the sleeping population of Helios. An ancient building had suddenly collapsed, none knew from what cause; there was no visible reason for its end; the air was calm, the waves were peaceful; it had lived its life and fell, with no visible sign of decay or of age upon it. It had stood there for twelve centuries, having been erected during the Byzantine rule of the country. The Ivory Tower, or the Lily Tower, as it was called by the populace, was one of the most famous and poetic possessions of the city, standing conspicuously on the north-west shore of the Bay of Helios. It looked like one of the porcelain towers of China, for it was made of bricks enamelled white; its form had the elegance of the minaret; at its base was the sea, in its rear a wood of cypress and of laurels.

The coast of Helianthus is never more beautiful than by night. On this night of the Ascension the city, until a late hour, was a crescent of artificial light. The watch-towers were crowned by cressets of fires. The quays and bridges were outlined with lamps, and, on the hills, many a village and villa

glowed with points aflame, which heralded the advent of a religious feast in that union of pagan and Christian superstitions which formed the country's creed. But where the Ivory Tower had stood, and had worn its diadem of flame on all such nights as this, there was darkness, and the only light came from the moon-rays shining on a great heap of dust and ashes, which covered the rocks and shelved down into the sea, like a huge grave, nameless and naked. Time would bring to cover it the short, sweet grass, the wild strawberry plant, the bramble and the dog-rose, the creeping thistle, the sweet-scented myrtle, the mosses, the daisies, the gold of the charlock and ragwort ; but it was now only a mountain of dust.

'Is that all ?' said the King, when he heard the cause of the sound which had disturbed his slumbers. 'I was afraid it was the powder magazine.'

To have lost even a few caissons of melinite would have seemed to him a much greater calamity than the ruin of any monument of art or relic of antiquity.

The Ivory Tower had been a thing of beauty, its whiteness growing warm in the golden glow of sunrise, its lofty and slender grace saluted by returning mariners throughout twelve centuries, its sonorous chimes resounding through summer silence, and rebuking winter storm. It had been kept in repair for no other reason than its extreme beauty, or what the artistic world called beauty ; a great waste of money in the eyes of the monarch. For it had been an entirely useless thing, in the estimation of the ruler of Helianthus ; it had never been used as a granary, as a signal station, as an observatory, nor even as a Christian house of prayer.



Late in the evening following on its fall, Othyris went by sea to view the ruins. During the day, the beach was crowded by throngs of townspeople, visiting the site of the disaster, who would have given him no peace had he gone there by daylight; even by night it was necessary to go very late to avoid being mobbed by the people.

The sky was lustrous with that radiance which the King would have considered so inferior to that of a searchlight. The moon was at the full, and Jove and Saturn were low on the southern horizon, but Antares and Arcturus shone, higher in the heavens, in all their solar splendour and their menacing mystery.

‘Happy those simple souls to whom the stars and planets are only lamps to steer by, hung up by the hand of God,’ thought Othyris, as a fishing-boat passed him leaning low down in the trough of the phosphorescent water.

When he went ashore with one of his gentlemen, he felt as if he stood by the grave of a friend. The vast pile of ruined bricks and shattered enamels covered a wide area of the rocks, and the base was washed by the white, moonlit, rippling surge.

‘If let alone,’ he thought, ‘in half a century the ruin will be a green hill. Nature will have clothed it. Let us leave it alone.’

The light from the round, golden moon was strong; it shone on the face and form of a woman who was standing on a strip of beach which had been left untouched by the fallen materials. She was clothed in black, and wore a black veil upon her head, after the manner of the women of the populace; she was young, and her profile was like that of the

Athene ; as she gazed upward it looked pure and clear as a cameo ; the nose straight, the upper lip short, the eyelashes long, the throat white and fine as in sculpture.

‘I have never seen her,’ thought Othyris. ‘She is dressed like a woman of the people ; but her face and her form are those of a goddess.’

She did not notice him ; she was absorbed in the spectacle of the ruin before her.

‘Oh, the pity of it !’ she murmured, and her eyes were full of tears.

Othyris uncovered his head.

‘The pity of it, indeed !’ he said.

She started, astonished to find any one so near, and her exclamation overheard ; she drew her veil more closely so as to conceal her features, and turned to leave the spot.

‘I come, Janos !’ she cried to a man in a rowing-boat below.

‘Let me not drive you away,’ murmured Othyris. ‘We have a common sorrow.’

But she did not answer or look back ; she went on swiftly, noiselessly, with gliding grace along the strip of beach to where the boat waited in the surf.

‘Shall I make inquiries, sir ?’ murmured the courtier who accompanied Othyris. He had been before then sent on errands of identification.

‘No, no, on no account whatever,’ said Othyris quickly. The little boat with the woman and the peasant was being sculled into deeper water, going outward and westward ; it made a black shadow on the silvery spaces of the moonlit sea for a while, then passed away into shadow and distance, and was

lost to sight. Was she the *diva loca* of the ruined shrine driven out into exile? The fancy pleased Othyris.

He took out the little sketch-book of silver point which he always carried with him, and drew her profile from memory by the light of the moon.

Her memory haunted Othyris, brief as had been the passage of her swift and silent steps over the smooth sea-sand. He smiled at his own preoccupation: truly, she had looked like a goddess drawn out from her sanctuary and not deigning longer to remain on earth.

'I am a fanciful fool,' he said to himself; but was it not better to feed on such fancies than to be drugged with absinthe, or to be drunk with war? At least his fancies harmed no one, and cost nothing to the lives and to the savings of the nation.

She had gone away across the moonlit water into the shadows where the sea was dark; it was fitting that a divinity whose altars were in ruins should so pass away from the sight of a mere mortal!

'I think, sir, that the man who was rowing is a peasant of the Helichrysum hills, whom I have seen in the market,' murmured Sir Pandarus, behind him on the beach. Othyris silenced him with a gesture.

Officious readiness in others to wait on his less noble desires had always aroused in him a strong disgust.

'That the fox eats the dove is bad enough,' he said once; 'but that lesser beasts should track and trap the doves, and bring them as offerings to the fox, is much worse.'

Othyris did not forget the *casta diva* of the

moonlit eve before the ruins of the Ivory Tower ; probably because she was the only woman who had ever eluded him. She was also of a wholly different type from any he had ever seen, and he had believed that he had seen every variety of class and breeding, of form and feature, in the sex. He could not assign her rank with any certainty. She had possessed the bearing of a patrician, the simplicity of a peasant, the placid grace of a goddess, the shyness of a startled nymph. She had fled from him over the sands like any Daphne from the Sun-god.

He realised Montaigne's truism, '*elles nous battent mieux en fuyant comme les Scythes.*' He spent hours in the endeavour to record the vision of her, but he never succeeded in contenting himself. There were many hundreds of women in Helios who wore that severe nun-like costume, with the black veil, which at will could so successfully conceal the features. The lowest female classes were gay with colour as a butterfly or a tulip ; but the industrial classes, the grades between the populace and the middle classes, invariably wore the black veil and the black skirt, as she had done, and under the protection of that sombre garb could pass unmolested from one end to the other of the city. Yet he did not think that she belonged to that class ; the uncovered hand which had drawn together the folds of the veil was of fine and delicate shape, and the outline of her profile and throat had the purity of a classic cameo.

But he knew that there were many old families, once patrician but now poor and obscure, who dwelt in the small coast-towns or in the recesses of the hills above ; families of ancient lineage, of proud traditions,

of strong prejudices, of uncomplaining poverty. She must, he thought, belong to one of those, and have been drawn out of her privacy by the loss of the Ivory Tower, which was so great a calamity to those who loved the old heroic past of Helianthus. Othyris knew nothing of those families, but he had always felt a great respect for them, beggared as they had been by the War of Independence, faithful to their traditions and irreconcilable with what was to them a foreign monarchy, content to live in obscurity and penury, and unpurchasable by place or money ; they were the last remnant of the old republican and patriotic substratum of the country.

Again and again he felt tempted to set some of the many panderers to his caprices on her quest ; but he never took the decisive step. He felt as though it would be profanity. The likeness he had drawn of her from memory, her face and throat alone bathed in a flood of moonlight, seemed to say to him, ' Let me be. I have given you an ideal. Is not that much in this world ? '

It stood on an ebony easel, and he had fresh flowers set before it as on an altar. A sentimental folly, he knew, or so at least it would have seemed to other men ; but was it not of such fancies that the grace and charm of the most innocent affections were made ?

To Othyris, who had been satiated by affections far from innocent, there was an infinite attraction in this illusive and spiritual beauty.

' That is a beautiful head,' said Gavroche, one day. ' Who is the original ? '

' It is a Helianthine divinity,' replied Othyris. ' It is a *diva ignota*. I know not her name.'

Tyras for once did not grin with his usual satyr's smile.

'Whoever she is, she is too good for mortal embraces,' he said. 'What a fine artist you might be if you chose, Elim ; and how well you keep your own counsel ! My secrets slip out when I am drunk.'

There was, of course, an immediate agitation in the city for the rebuilding of the Ivory Tower. There are always numbers of people who are ready to profit in various ways by a public calamity.

'It can never be rebuilt,' said Othyris, to those who approached him on the subject.

Every one was astonished at such an impression in a lover of the arts ; that he should say so surprised even his father.

'What do you mean ? Why cannot it be rebuilt ?' he asked. 'Do you mean that the foundations have subsided ? That the rocks are unsound ?'

'No, sir,' replied his son.

'What do you mean, then ?'

'I mean that there is no longer amongst men the mental or moral power to produce such a thing. There is no longer the reverence, the patience, or the devotion necessary.'

The King twirled his moustaches with unutterable contempt.

'I supposed you meant some practical obstacle ! If the resources of modern invention are not equal to renew the constructions of ignorant ages, progress is vain.'

'It is vain indeed, sir,' said his son.

This seemed so preposterous to his father that he had scarcely patience to continue the conversation.

‘Vain—vain?’ he muttered angrily. ‘With the immense resources of modern mechanical and hydraulic power it would certainly be very easy to——’

He left the sentence, as he left most of his phrases, to complete itself in the superior eloquence of silence.

‘Something would no doubt be erected in five years, in ten, in twenty,’ replied Othyris. ‘But it would not be that which we have lost. The Ivory Tower of Isma was one of the artistic marvels of the world; a hundred and seventy years were occupied in the building of it; that is proved by the Coptic manuscripts of the Ismaian monastery.’

His father by a puff of smoke indicated the value of such statements in his sight.

‘Because all the materials were brought by rowers, in galleys, and were carried up on slaves’ shoulders, as the bricks were for the Pharaohs’ Pyramids,’ said the King, with the profound contempt which he felt for such primitive means. ‘A hundred or more steam-tugs would bring all the substances to be used, to-day, direct from the quarries or the foundries by water; and high-pressure engines would at once raise them into position.’

Othyris was silent.

‘That is, if it be worth while to rebuild a mere belfry?’ added his father. ‘The public seem to desire some newer kind of erection. I have suggested a lighthouse.’

‘With an electric lantern, revolving behind red glass?’

‘Precisely,’ said the monarch, who approved the suggestion, but was suspicious of the sarcastic tone in which it was uttered.

‘Your wishes, sir, will of course be law to the Committee,’ said Othyris.

‘Humph!’ said the King. ‘You are not on it?’

‘No, sir, I declined to be so.’

‘Why?’

‘Because I should be unquestionably in a minority; a minority perhaps of one.’

‘Because you would oppose those who will be representative of my views?’

‘It is because I could not venture to do so, sir, and because I could not either dissemble my own views, that I have requested them not to place my name on the Committee. I ventured to do this without referring so small a matter to your Majesty.’

‘If I order you to assume the chairmanship of the Committee?’ he said, after a pause.

‘I must no doubt obey; but I would entreat your Majesty not to place me in the painful position of being compelled to dissent publicly from views which are known to be favoured by yourself.’

The King made a guttural exclamation, rendered unintelligible by his teeth being closed on his cigarette. He lighted a fresh one, and dismissed his son and the subject.

He would have had great pleasure in placing Elim in that or any other difficult position, but he felt that the finesse and the obstinacy of his son would be more than a match for his own; they had been so before then.

He felt that Elim’s deference and obedience went just so far as Elim’s own convictions went of what was due from him, and incumbent upon him, and went no farther; and that any attempt at coercion would always and irrevocably fail. Elim was a fool



in many ways, his father thought, but there was grit in him.

It was this in Othyris which beyond all other things incensed the King ; this deference in form and tone, coupled with opposition in reality. He had rarely been able to accuse his second son of any want of deference either in manner or in act ; yet he was always conscious of an actual independence of judgment which entirely escaped him.

‘It was the training of that beast Basil which made him like this,’ he thought now, as Othyris withdrew. He had never disliked any one more than his brother-in-law Basil, who had, he thought, thwarted and irritated him throughout life, and after death still annoyed him perpetually through that vast fortune, which by its bequest made its present possessor so largely independent of him.

He had not patience to pursue the subject with his son ; but when the Minister of Fine Arts next had audience with him, and ventured to speak of the matter, he suggested to that harassed and bewildered official that an iron lighthouse should be erected in place of the perished tower.

‘If you try to renew the past you will please nobody,’ he said ; and in this he was correct. ‘Be frankly utilitarian ; you will at least please utilitarians. The tower was a beautiful thing, or at least people said so, but it was absolutely useless. Replace it by something without beauty, but useful.’

The Minister of Fine Arts felt that he himself and his Department must be equally useless in the estimation of his sovereign.

## CHAPTER IX

A FEW days later Othyris had to preside at a charity meeting in Helios for the relief of the famine and general distress in the country. To speak in public was always disagreeable to him ; and this kind of gathering never found any favour in his sight. He disbelieved in its efficiency as a means of doing good, and he thought the boastful philanthropy which set it on foot rather more discreditable than no philanthropy at all. He knew that most of those present would go to see himself ; would offer their donations because they desired to look well in his sight ; and that nine-tenths of the crowd gathered there would care no more for the sufferings of the dying and the dead by hunger, cold, and misery, than a *gourmet* cares for the sufferings of the crawfish or the turtle which give him his patties and his soup at dinner.

‘It is waste of words, waste of breath, waste of wrath,’ he thought, as he rose to speak, and he knew that what he was about to say would be hateful to his hearers.

‘Gentlemen,’ said Othyris, after the usual greetings of courtesy, the statistics of lives and deaths, and the calculation of required monies, and the necessary accompaniment of conventional phrases without

which no public meeting would be orthodox or even possible,—‘Gentlemen, what can be said of these modern civilisations of which modern language boasts so greatly? The world is rich, exceedingly rich; for waste, for pomp, for display, for self-indulgence, for armaments of all kinds, millions, billions, trillions, are always accumulating, always forthcoming. Yet men and women and children are found dead of hunger in every land, from the snow plains of the Septentriones to our own classic hills of Helianthus, from the crowded cities of Europe to the rice-fields of the East and the gold-fields of the West. What progress can be alleged whilst famine stalks through every quarter of the globe? Whilst you and I eat rich food three times a day, and rare birds and beasts are paid their weight in bullion that they may pass into our kitchens, human beings, oftentimes through no fault of their own, suffer the torture of hunger through days and weeks and months, then drop down and die, worn out by the unequal struggle.

‘You will reply that this is inevitable; that it is the fault of no person and of no system; that it is the natural result of laws beyond men’s control, that the successful wax fat, and the obscure perish for want of what they have not had luck, or talent, or perhaps dishonesty enough, to gain.

‘Gentlemen, it is in this reply, the usual, the orthodox, the stereotyped reply of both the capitalist and the political economist, that the condemnation of modern civilisation lies. Civilisation has solved no one of the problems of life. It has overfed the minority; it has underfed the majority; and a large proportion it has not fed at all.

‘Victor Hugo, in one of his sonorous but fallacious phrases, has said : “He who opens a school closes a prison.” This sounds well and means nothing. The ill-digested and desultory education of the day is the recruiting sergeant of the gaols. That education is alone healthy and profitable which tends to make the human creature do well what necessity and circumstances require him to do at all. But although the technical schools may, perhaps, do this technically, general education, early education, do nothing of the kind ; morally, the education of the schools is neutral where it is not mischievous.

‘In a great nation overseas, where the government is nominally democratic, where education is general and enforced, and where every child can read and write, lynch law is the frequent redresser of injuries, and mobs burn accused persons alive and without trial : what has education done for humanity in that great nation ? You will say that there good food has been of no use, for the lynching mobs are for the most part recruited from well-fed persons ; but they drink still more than they eat—and drink, the curse of man, is in one form or another almost universal in that hemisphere. In all the nations of our own hemisphere drinking and hunger reign side by side. Called absinthe, or beer, or brandy, or wine, or gin, or what it may, it fills with its worshippers the clubs, the music halls, the cafés, the cellars, the public-houses, the boulevards. Of what use is civilisation ? It does not turn away one man in a million from the threshold of the drinking shops. The children’s bread is given away to buy the poison of chemically prepared toxines for their fathers and, alas, too often for their mothers also.

‘There is a country well known to us all, lying on cool northerly waters, great in story, strong in enterprise, foremost in commerce ; she was a mere barbarian when Helianthus was the glory of the arts and the Venus Victrix of the then known world ; now she is far greater than we are. Yet in her metropolis, the largest and the richest of the world, miles on miles of streets are occupied by what in her language are called gin-palaces ; crowded every night of the year by half-mad throngs of men and women of the people, insane with drink and spending their last coin upon it. Yet she presumes to send out her religious envoys to convert the heathen !

‘Gentlemen, there are other cancers in the body politic of which it would take many hours to make the diagnosis. Take one only : the deadly trades. Many trades exist, enrich the manufacturer, and contribute to the comfort or the luxury of society, in the pursuit of which the man or woman employed in them dies almost certainly before reaching his or her thirty-fifth year. Reflect upon this fact. Do you seriously think that the capitalists who make their fortune by trades which cause this mortality amongst the workers are really so greatly superior to the Helianthine of two thousand years ago, who killed a slave to feed the fish of his piscina ?

‘You murmur ? Well, sirs, reflect instead.

‘In the course of last year I visited our classic and romantic island of Philyra, daughter of Oceanus, nourished on sun and sea and burning lava, as she has been from all time. I saw the chief sulphur mines of the isle. I need not remind you, sirs, of

the many and precious uses to which sulphur is put ; or that the sulphur of Philyra is esteemed the best in the world. Has it ever occurred to you to ask how that sulphur is obtained ? It is chiefly obtained through the labour of young children, whose eyes smart and grow blind under the stinging irritation of the mineral they carry up and down the ladders all day long. Was it worse, gentlemen, to sell for slaves the fair-haired children of the conquered barbarians here in the market-place of Helios ? I doubt it. These children are slaves ; they cannot escape from their lot ; they are as helpless as their sisters sold for a trifle to follow their foreign buyer into the cities of other lands to gain money for him by their suffering and debasement. All these young and innocent lives are mercilessly sacrificed to the interests of others. One can do no more for them than for slaves ; they are slaves in all except the name. What faces one ? A vested interest ; the force of commerce ; the might of trade.

‘Sulphur is of great utility—of more utility than such children’s lives. It must be procured in the cheapest way possible. The cheapest way is to use children. What can I do to save them ? Nothing. Nothing more than I can do to stop the seismic convulsions in the bowels of the earth. I may call meetings, upbraid their employers, rebuke their parents, call on the Press to rouse the public. What use is what I do ? It is none. Regulations are made, leading articles are written, ladies weep, orators declaim, and then it all—the misery of it—goes back into the same groove. Trades must not be interfered with ; commerce must not be hampered ; sulphur must not be made dear.

‘It is one of the chief supports of the trade of Helianthus. Brigs and merchantmen carry it out of our ports all over the world. It has innumerable uses, immeasurable values ; and the children—who have no value, for there are so many of them—the children must pass and perish. Gentlemen, what is a civilisation worth in which such things are possible, are indeed of habitual occurrence, of accepted usage ? Sirs, I doubt greatly whether the greatest criminal amongst us is the criminal who meets his fate in the prisoner’s dock, and not the rich and prosperous person who, seated in his arm-chair, signs his cheques with his gold pen, eats and drinks, and enjoys and praises this world as the most admirable issue of the intellect of man and of the will of God.

‘It is impossible for the governing classes to have influence on the governed, because our morality (or the self-interest which we substitute for it) is a mass of contradictions, a chaotic jumble of anomalies. We condemn murder ; but we deify war. We kill the criminal who poisons one person ; we do not touch the manufacturer who poisons many workmen. We condemn theft ; but we approve annexation. We punish a carter cruel to his horse ; we applaud a general who kills two hundred thousand horses. We imprison the drover who wounds a bullock ; we decorate the contractor who tortures on land and sea a million of cattle. We abhor alcohol in the throats of the poor ; we find it a perfume in the mouths of the rich. We worship education ; and we leave children to be prostituted in brothels and worked to death in mines. We imprison the cut-purse ; we honour and decorate the usurer. We have no clear

knowledge or consistent treatment of crime. When it is naked and isolated, we punish it savagely ; when it is cloaked, and goes in well-armed companies, we do not dare to touch it ; we take off our hats to it, we seat it in our banqueting-halls.

‘ You will say that this has always been so in all ages. Perhaps that is the reason why crime has always been general.

‘ It is impossible for the masses to be impressed by rulers and teachers who, whatever their theories, do in practice show that crime is, in their code, no crime at all if it be large enough and successful enough to dominate its generation. The multitude does not reason, but it perceives, if slowly ; it feels, if dully ; it is stirred, if obscurely ; and is guided by conclusions which it draws by blind instinct, as the mollusc sucks in sea-water and sun-light. It is unconsciously penetrated by a sense of the untruth and the hypocrisy of the morality which is preached to it, and of the laws which are laid down for it. For that reason the one has little influence on it, and the other has little awe for it ; and after thousands of years of various kinds of successive civilisations and of contradictory religions, we see that the political and social forces of the world are absolutely impotent, either to prevent crimes, or to lead criminals back to virtue. The fault lies more with the rulers than with the ruled.’

A dead silence followed on his concluding words. They were all thinking : ‘ If he should ever be king, good Lord, deliver us ! ’

His speech grated on the nerves of his hearers ; for the most part, they felt that it was unjust to be summoned by a chairman who was a prince of the



reigning House, and then be made to listen to a discourse worthy of a Liebknecht or a Karl Marx.

The enunciation of such opinions made a lively sensation in Helios, and caused a great scandal in society. Nothing is so dangerous or so detested as an attack on vested interests. All the superior classes, all the users of gold pens, all the comfortable and complacent persons to whom civilisation was a Bona Dea, mother of prosperity, of invention, of luxury and of good government, felt themselves outraged in their most sacred sentiments.

A cancer in the milk-white breast of their goddess ! What blasphemy !

Any other orator than a son of the King would have been howled down into silence at the first word.

*On ne prêche qu'aux convertis.* Othyris knew that. He knew that respect for his rank alone restrained his hearers from comments far from complimentary to him ; he read their astonishment and their disapprobation on their features, beneath the surface-smiles of courteous urbanity ; he was well aware what inane self-complacency he had troubled and startled.

The reports by stenographers of this speech, which so entirely offended all prosperity and affronted privilege, were by superior order withdrawn from publication in the Press, and a few commonplace words were substituted for it in all reports of the meeting.

The suppression made the Ministry nervous. They did not care to offend a person who was so nearly in direct succession to the throne ; but the actual occupant of the throne had crossed out heavily with

a red pencil the proofs of the speech when submitted to him and had ordered its entire suppression ; and no resistance was possible.

‘That you suppressed my speech was a matter of course,’ said Othyris, when he next met Michael Soranis, who had succeeded Kantakuzene as Prime Minister when the latter was defeated over the scheme for the fortification of the Hundred Isles. ‘But I think you should not have put other words into my mouth. *Mon verre est petit, mais je bois dans mon verre.*’

‘But your Royal Highness makes others drink, alas !’ murmured with a sigh the harassed politician.

‘Do I make others drink ?’ wondered Othyris, as he passed onward across the great courtyard of the House of Deputies. He did not think so. It is very hard to make others drink, unless they have a taste for the draught you offer, and in that case they get it without you.

The Crown Prince was, of course, greatly scandalised at the speech. ‘It is a direct incitement to the poor to plunder the rich,’ he said with horror. ‘What would he propose instead of the labour of the poor if that were abolished ? Everything is done which can be done to diminish the evil effects of the deadly trades ; the trades themselves must exist ; no children anywhere are forced to work at them. If the parents send them, that is not the fault of the masters or of the overseers. What would he substitute instead of the children ? The commerce of the world cannot be stopped because some suffer.’

No one should say that rich men stole ; they accumulate. Even so, Governments do not ever

steal ; they annex. Everything is excused when it is *en gros*, or *en bloc* : you kill one man, you go to the scaffold or the hulks ; you kill fifty thousand men, you are decorated, pensioned, honoured, deified. Certainly you do ; what could be more right and proper ? The whole question lies in your quantities. The whole matter is one of degree.

## CHAPTER X

IN the autumn of the year, King John was suddenly taken ill, for almost the first time in his life, except when he had suffered from an occasional surfeit of the pleasures of the table with its consequent indigestion. He had contracted a slight cold in paying an unexpected night-visit to rouse up a distant garrison, and with the chill of it upon him had gone to a monster battue, where he had slaughtered the birds and beasts driven past him till his arms ached. The dense autumn woods were damp and vaporous, and in them his cold was increased, so that it became bronchitis. He was never in any danger, but the mere idea of his malady caused depression in the Exchanges of Europe ; why, it would probably have puzzled the stockholders and the publicists to say, for if he had died, his eldest son would have succeeded him peaceably, and would have continued to govern on precisely the same lines, with the placid and resolute composure of a man who knows that Heaven keeps his powder dry for him.

Ignorant people imagine that the law having settled that the King never dies, it cannot be a matter of great concern who is, or who has ceased to be, the King ; since, if the personality change, the office remains unchanged. Even courtiers admit this,

since they say, 'The King is dead ; long live the King !'

Fortunately the next day all the newspapers of Europe were able to print in capital letters the happy fact that the attack was not dangerous, since King John had been able to eat some spoonfuls of chicken *purée*. His kingdom was intensely interesting to all the other Powers, because each of them wanted it ; and it had an equal interest for politicians as for speculators, because its geographical position and its trimming policy made it an unknown quantity in the possible event of a great war ; politicians and speculators both being keenly aware that Treaties of Alliance, like all other contracts, hold good only until some penknife makes a slit in them, and are inviolable only until one or other of the contracting parties tears them up and dances on their pieces.

The Crown Prince was assiduous in his attendance at his father's bedside. Like every person conscious of considerable superiority in himself to all others, he could not but be sensible that life in denying him the highest opportunities was unjust. He would not have believed in himself as he did, if he had not believed that he alone was destined to govern Helianthus with that force and firmness which the mingled idiocy and wickedness of its inarticulate multitudes required. But he had an extreme respect for his father.

His father, he considered, was an admirable ruler ; although in the recesses of his mind, Theo could not but be conscious that he himself would be a still better one.

His father did yield sometimes ; Theo knew that he himself would never yield, on any question what-

soever, or to any adviser ever born of man. If any one had ever presumed to point out to him as a deterrent the fate of Louis XVI., he would have replied that Louis would have lived and died at the Tuileries or Versailles if he had only known how to use the guillotine properly on his subjects, instead of waiting till his subjects used it on him ; which perhaps is true, for if he had been quicker than the nation in making the axe his ally, there would probably have been no Terror, no Consulate, no Empire. Theo put away from him as whispers of the devil those irrepressible desires to be himself the ruler which assailed him, and obtruded themselves on the reverential sorrow with which he heard that the lobe of his father's left lung was inflamed as well as the left bronchial tube. Slightly, only very slightly, the physicians affirmed, so slightly indeed that the inflammation was almost imperceptible ; perhaps even totally imperceptible, thought the nurse, whose experience in hospital wards had made her sceptical of medical assertions.

Four nights were passed by the Crown Prince, fully dressed, in a chamber adjoining the King's. He was respectfully assured that such a vigil was not necessary, but he was a man who would never allow his duty to be dictated to him even by so infallible a pope as a doctor. During that semi-slumber, that mixture of confused dreams and congested reflections which accompany such vigils, he could not but see as in a vision the country as it would be when it should have passed under his own rule—a country shaved, cropped, drilled, put in irons, fed by rule, lodged by order, made clean by Act of Parliament, kept virtuous by regulations, with an inexorable

hygiene and an inoculated virtue ; its foremost privilege and duty being to carry the musket, its second being to pay all taxes with humble alacrity on the days ordained.

Theo of Gunderöde never doubted his own infallibility, his own semi-divinity, his own absolute preciousness to the nation which, without him and his, would, he was certain, be lost in a whirlpool of blood and a chaos of infidelity. It never came within his mental vision to suppose that he was an ordinary man with less than the usual allowance of brain and more than the usual allowance of obstinacy, whose life or whose death was entirely immaterial to the world except so far as the fables and falsehoods of other men's follies had lifted him up into unreal values.

Such stupidity is, indeed, not without its uses to persons of exalted station, as it prevents them from ever doubting their own suitability for such exaltation. No shadow or shred of such a doubt had ever visited the mind of the Crown Prince ; a mind made of stout impenetrable stuff, as minds which are comfortable to their possessors always are. He was as honestly convinced of his own utility and indispensability to his country as a mother is convinced of hers to the foetus she carries in her womb. The country could only live, breathe, have its being, through him and his family ; remove himself and his family, where would the country be ? Broken up under some foreign rule, no doubt, or swamped in socialism under his brother Elim. He himself was the only possible Vice-Regent of God in Helianthus. Doubtless he overrated his own qualities ; and in his own estimate called obstinacy firmness,

ignorance wisdom, fool-hardiness courage, stupidity superiority, brutality virility, and so on, even as ordinary mortals baptize their defects as excellences. But this could only be proved when he came to the throne, and so long as he lived there would certainly be always one person to whom it would never be proven, namely, himself.

Whilst he kept his vigils, and persuaded himself that he was absorbed in his anxiety and apprehension, his brother Othyris was haunted by a different kind of disquietude. If his father died, he himself would be next heir to the throne. The present illness brought this possibility home to him with startling force.

Therefore, if in the innermost soul of the Crown Prince there was a lurking, secret sense of disappointment when King John got well enough to eat some roast pheasant instead of chicken broth, Othyris was, without any mingled feelings, unfeignedly glad; and a great apprehension was lifted off his mind when his father went for his first drive in the avenues of the public park, showing a complete convalescence by the size of his cheroot. The people cheered the King as he passed (for in every crowd there are always many who are good-natured, and many more who are snobs); and the sovereign thought to himself: 'They know what they would have lost if I had died.' To him it seemed natural and fitting that they should be grateful to himself, his physicians, and Providence for the favour of his recovery.

There was a Thanksgiving Service in honour of his recovery at the Cathedral; that great and famous building which had been in its earliest years



a temple of Zeus, and in its present composite architecture was Classic, Byzantine, Renaissance, holding a score of various and opposing styles in its mighty rambling mass, and sending forth its sonorous chimes over the city at its feet. The celebration was imposing in the mingled religious, secular, and military pomp and ceremony which characterised it. All the princes of the reigning House were, of course, present; troops were massed in large numbers in the cathedral square; the great bell of solid silver, only heard on supreme occasions, sent its sweet, deep notes into the springtide; and a considerable number of persons, chiefly women and children, were crushed and suffocated between the barricades covered with crimson cloth, and the lines of armed soldiery and police. This is the human sacrifice which is as essential to the success of a modern triumph as decapitated heads rolling on the grass are necessary to the feasts of savage and misguided nations.

The monarch, standing before the high altar, with his hand on his sword hilt, and the sunlight falling down from the golden dome on to the bald crown of his head, was an inharmonious central figure; but all countries are used to that kind of incongruity. Even Cæsar's cranium did not wholly suit the laurel wreath.

'What is in his mind?' wondered Othyrus, as he stood a step behind his father, before that grand and glittering altar. 'Gratitude? Faith? Desire to deserve renewed health? Sentiment, tender and touching, of the city's rejoicing? Belief in the Deity to whom thanks and praise are being offered in his name by those lovely voices of the youthful choristers and the vox humana of the noble organ?' No: not

any one of these emotions was likely to be felt by John of Gunderöde. He was probably chafing at the length of the service, and feeling the impatience for food and drink of a hungry convalescent.

The King drove home behind his beautiful white horses, holding his plumed casque on his knees, and bending his head to the people with more cordiality than usual. The enthusiasm of the population pleased him, and the vast crowds, kept in place by the soldiery, were guarantee to him that he could go to war when he pleased. For a war was the desire of his soul.

In these days a country which has not a war on its hands is considered to be either numerically or financially weak ; probably both. King John had reigned thirty years and had sent his troops nowhere ; he had acquired no territory ; he had utilised none of the raw material which had been gathered and drilled so perseveringly, except, indeed, once when an expedition to a desert country had been planned and executed by the ambitious old Minister, Domitian Corvus, and had ended in the decimation of the Helianthine battalions by a ruler uncivilised and unchristian—a period of sad humiliation to the nation and the monarch. Ever since that painful period the King had no desire in his soul more strong and more difficult of realisation than his wish for war ; he would have been quite ready to send his troops to be cut to pieces in aid of one of his allies ; but Europe was at peace—that is, was armed to the teeth, but afraid to move. The only campaign which offered itself was one in alliance with Candor, in barbaric lands.

The great and ancient kingdom of Candor, which

had of late years called herself Imperia, because she thought it sounded finer in the ears of mankind and was told that it was philologically more correct, was a great friend to the newly-made kingdom of Helianthus. She did not call herself an ally, because, whilst friendship engages to nothing, alliance compromises and may want a sword drawn; and Candor's sword was always in use for herself alone, unsheathed, all the world over, preceding and protecting her commerce and her religion. Candor liked to keep her hands free; and to that wisdom she owed her eminence and vast extension. No doubt, to be every nation's ally, as Julius was, comes to much the same thing in the end; but the policy of Candor (otherwise Imperia) was the wiser: no Power could say that Candor had deceived it, for she never promised anything.

Her sovereign and princes paid flattering visits to other countries, her fleets did the same; her ambassadors were doubly discreet, because they were careful not to know the language of any country to which they were accredited; she was always ready to lend out of her great riches, if the security given were good; and her banks were the most solid in all the world. But her sword she would not draw in international complications; it was essentially a domestic instrument, and was generally only used on black, brown, and yellow bodies, which of course are not counted as true war-game any more than in sport rabbits are counted as tigers. At the present moment Candor was pushing on Helianthus to what she called expansion; ordinary mortals call it conquest. The synonym is not new; it was in use in the time of the Cæsars. King John thought expansion

an admirable term, and an admirable thing ; and he did not perceive that whilst it was really so to the florid health, the full-blooded strength, the plethora of wealth, the masterful temper, and the energetic force of Candor herself, it was to the Helianthine realm and people, with their scanty resources, their insufficient population, and their enormous taxation, as injurious as blood-letting to a weak constitution. King John had visited hospitals to little purpose, for he had not learned to see the difference between robust health and anæmia. To him war always appeared a sanitary phlebotomy ; so, in despite of all precedent and good sense, he prepared to go to war or, as Candor called it, to colonise, to civilise, to open new markets, to change sandy wastes into rich cornfields.

There was great activity in the ports, and the depôts, and the barrack-yards ; the railway trains were full of recruits and men of the reserve huddled together like cattle in trucks ; there was much speech-making on platforms, and spouting of vain-glorious periods ; and contractors were jubilant, getting rid of all their inferior goods at most superior prices. Helianthus, who had so much to learn and was frequently being boxed on the ears for her ignorance by her big sisters, was as a whole flattered by the idea that she could go a-colonising with her flag flying, as in the country districts her boys and girls went a-maying with their posies tied to poles. The enterprise was not to a great degree popular, but it was trumpeted by the Press, praised in the clubs, and held up to national admiration by fluent orators both in and out of Parliament and Senate. The King even sacrificed several days of blackcock

and wild turkey shooting to contribute his quota to the national enthusiasm, and to do his part in offering to the public the alcohol of a boastful vanity. He received in the throne-room a deputation of senators, deputies, and personages ; he wore full-dress uniform, his grandest Orders, and a jewelled sabre ; and he fully believed that he was doing his highest duty to the nation and the world in sacrificing himself thus in autumn days, when blackcock and wild turkeys might have been falling like rain before his breech-loader. He congratulated the deputation, the country, and himself, on the martial temper which (according to him) was growing up amongst the younger men ; and predicted that, under the favouring benignity of Providence, the Helianthines would become stronger and more powerful with every decade, and rise to true greatness in the history of modern nations. Great !—what is the meaning of the adjective in the mouths of monarchs, of princes, and of statesmen ? A docile populace, pleased to beget sons for the slaughter ; ready to starve on its own hearths in order that the policy of its leaders may be victorious abroad ; veteran soldiers willing to leave their occupations and families to take up arms, and meekly accepting neglect and starvation on their return to their homes ; the flag flying in every far-away distant sphere, that the sweater may thrive and the goldbroker gorge ; the active army a submissive servant, equally ready to ravage a dark continent abroad, or to gag liberty at home ; the navy, a mighty tool always at hand to blockade, and bombard, and burn on any shore, wherever the potential traders at home require new marts, or a rival Power has gained a footing ; an exchequer

deep as the deep sea, into which fools pour their earnings meekly and trustfully, and the spendthrift State plunges ravenous hands unpunished—this is for a country to be great as modern monarchs and their ministers construe greatness. Should Helianthus be behind her sister-nations in this kind of greatness? Forbid it, Heaven!

‘More whipped-cream flavoured with curaçoa,’ whispered Tyras; and Othyris wondered in secret:

‘Does he really believe what he says? He lies like truth.’

It is true that the power of self-delusion is enormous; and men in high places are saturated with it as the drinker with a drug.

The Crown Prince alone listened with a devout belief and admiration; he would say just such things himself in future years. Great? Doubtless the country would be great—under himself. Great! The word seemed to boom through the air, thrice repeated as it had been in the sovereign’s harsh, rasping, authoritative tones.

Othyris heard in it the grinding roll of cannon wheels, the tramp of young men going to their death, the crash of exploding shells, the rattle of emptying money-bags, the moans of widowed women, of fatherless children.

King John put off his uniform, and Orders, and jewelled sabre, dressed himself in a morning suit of tweed, and sat down to his noonday breakfast. His conscience was satisfied, and his vanity, which mattered more, was pleased. To speak well was not a talent by any means natural to him. In learning to speak in public he had contended with many personal defects; a confused articulation, a slowness

of utterance, a halting memory, a tendency to stammer ; but he had vanquished these impediments, although he could not alter the unmelodious tones of his voice, which he had, however, disciplined into a certain imperiousness befitting his position, at least in his own eyes and in those of his courtiers. He was gratified at the consciousness that he had spoken well, and that his speech was being telegraphed to the four quarters of the globe. It gave him the sense of being a great monarch ; of being one of those who make the fine weather and the sunshine of the world. Also, as far as an ardent desire could be felt in his phlegmatic breast, he wished to try his troops in real war, as a boy, having played with toy soldiers till he is tired, longs to be at more serious pastimes with powder and shot. And as scientific professors make their experiments, as it is said, *in corpore vili*, so he was glad to make his first trial of the capacity of his army on the inferior opponents of barbaric nations. For in the recesses of his soul he was not sure of his troops ; and being a shrewd and capable person he was aware that his commissariat was by no means to be trusted in the all-important office of supplies.

But alas for the illusions of international friendships, Candor (alias Imperia) changed her mind, because she had changed her administration. Moreover Gallia set up her back and showed her teeth, like the fiery creature she is, and the new government in the great realm of Candor was not disposed to irritate her. Gallia was her foe, and Helianthus was her friend ; but nations, like individuals, must throw over their friends sometimes, so Candor threw over the Helianthines. Her diplomatists caused them to

understand that the moment had not yet arrived when they could go a-conquering as their villagers went a-maying ; that it would be wiser to furl the flags and untie the posies. Helianthus obeyed, *la mort dans l'âme*. She was not strong enough to stand alone, and to go by herself into the sandy wastes of the land of ruby mines and tsetse-flies.

The King was bitterly enraged, painfully mortified ; and he could show neither rage nor mortification. He could shoot blackcock and wild turkeys, indeed, all day long and every day ; but there are hours of chagrin and humiliation when even the gun fails to console the sportsman.

The ships were unloading ; the trains were taking the regiments back to their home-quarters ; the flags were being rolled up and put on stands like umbrellas ; the hundreds and thousands of mules and pack-saddles collected were being sold at a tenth part of their cost ; the barracks were hearing only the everyday squeak of the bugles. The influential organs of the Press put Bellona back in a drawer and set up in her stead her rival Pax ; even as the cheap toy-sellers packed up all their little military playthings, and instead sold ducks and geese, or cats and mice. Only the contractors, although disappointed, were consoled ; because if the stores which they had so profusely provided rotted uselessly in the warehouses of the State, the State had already paid for them at ten times their value.

They would not have the hoped-for pleasure of supplying for two or three years, to an entire army, musty flour, mouldy rice, ilex berries for coffee, chemicals for liquors, and all the other luxuries of



civilisation ; but in a smaller way they always did a good business in these things with the commissariat.

The abandonment of her conquering (alias colonising) projects gave a bad blow beneath the belt to Helianthine credit, and sent her stocks down on the Exchanges of her neighbours. She had contracted large war loans for which she would have to pay heavily for probably many years to come. Financiers were unkind to her, and made her feel her want of capital and of independence. Her military men were disappointed and sullen. The increase in her taxation had no equivalent in flattered national vanity. She had not even the loot of a barbaric palace, or a captive dusky king with a huge belly and a prehensile jaw, to show in her cities to her populace. Gallia mocked her with unkind raillery, and Candor promised her better luck next time. Helianthus realised the bitter wisdom of the prayer, 'Save me from my friends, dear God ; from my enemies I can defend myself.'

The uncivilised monarch who had escaped the blessings of civilisation at the cannon's mouth, sent to Helios some living lions and ostriches as a present to the ruler of Helianthus, some ivory, ebony, and uncut gems ; but these humble offerings have not about them the glory and glamour of booty, and gave no pleasure to the Gunderöde or the populace. They would have been visited by delighted multitudes if they had been brought in cages and cases by returning and victorious troop-ships ; but as mere signs of a grateful barbarian's relief at having escaped invasion and education, they lacked interest ; and the lions roared and raged in impotent wretchedness, and

the ostriches rubbed their plumes off against the bars of their cages almost disregarded.

‘Why, whether in our pleasure or our pain, are the poor beasts and birds always sacrificed?’ thought Othyris. It is a question which many have asked before him, but to which none have ever had any reply.

## CHAPTER XI

GREAT news was at this period being circulated throughout Helianthus.

The Crown Princess was pregnant after a sterility of ten years ! Medical men certified the fact. Journalists glorified it. Ministers went on missions of announcement ; ambassadors came on errands of felicitation. The successful advent of the fifth month was proclaimed to an expectant and a delighted people ; or a people ordered to be delighted, as they were ordered to be virtuous, by Act of Parliament. Personally Princess Gertrude, a modest, retiring and reserved person, suffered horribly from this publicity. It offended and tortured every innermost fibre of her womanhood. The congratulations of the President of the Council were as painful to her as the bulletins of the Court physicians. But she did not demur to any of it for one moment : it was all part of her duty to endure this exposure.

If she envied the charcoal-seller in her black den the privacy which that den afforded her to pass through her pregnancy and travail in peace, she never said so. She bore this part of her punishment as mutely and meekly as she had borne the rest ; she had gone through this ordeal twice before. If only her reward might be at last to bring forth a male child !

This desire, strong in almost every woman, was in her intense ; she longed to be the mother of a monarch, and she sighed to have removed from her what she felt was a reproach. She scarcely dared to hope for the gratification of her desire. Both King John and her husband did not conceal their contemptuous conviction that she would be incapable of bearing a son ; that when the nine moons should have run their course, another little female creature would bleat in a world where even female royalty does not count as much as male.

The Crown Prince himself felt that he had not deserved such an unaccountable slight from a Deity whom he had always served zealously, and in whose honour he would with pleasure have cheerfully burnt ten thousand unbelievers, if burning had still been in vogue.

If only this time Heaven would vouchsafe to give the throne an heir ! It was extraordinary, inscrutable, and sorely trying to the strongest religious faith, that whilst male infants wailed and squirmed by the million in the dwellings of the poor all the world over, kicked their cold little feet on rotten straw, and sucked with dry, hungry lips at empty breasts, a Prince, most orthodox, most impeccable, the central pillar of the constitution, should have been blessed by no son in a dozen years of wedlock.

‘Ah ! the poor soul !’ thought Madame Ogier, the Gallian ambassadress, looking at Princess Gertrude at a Court ceremony. ‘If she were only a grocer’s wife, she could go away, and unlace her stays, and lie down. But as it is she is just like the poor horses they use at home to tread out wheat in the

farmyards : she is under the whip, and she must go round and round, and round and round.'

Often had she watched those horses, for she had an uncle a small farmer in a central Gallian province, where the young horses are driven in a circle half-frantic, rearing and kicking, to thrash out the ripened corn under their unshod hoofs.

'The lines of great folks are not laid in pleasant places, as little ones think,' the good lady who represented Gallia at the Helianthine Court said to her daughter. 'We envy them when we see them a long way off ; but we mistake, my dear, we mistake.'

Madame Ogier herself was middle-aged ; she was stout ; she was short of breath ; her diamond tiara made her head ache ; her ample bosom, displayed under its pearls, made her feel embarrassed ; the obligations of etiquette worried her ; she sighed for the time when there had been no other palace in their own lives than the Palace of Justice at home, and when she had herself superintended the savoury cooking of the *darne de saumon* and the *entrecôte à la Bordelaise* for the dinner of her young and hungry advocate. In the odd, topsy-turvy, half-reactionary and half-revolutionary society of the capital cities of our time we may so often see the prototypes of Madame Ogier—excellent women, devoted helpmates in the earlier stages of their lords' careers ; mere hobbles on the foot in their men's later position ; conscious that they are so, yet tenacious of their marital and social rights, wearing their sparkling jewels with heavy head and heart at imperial and royal balls, disfiguring the present and overshadowing the future of their brilliant partners, living witnesses of the angular and melancholy issues of monogamy.

‘I was of use to you once, Ferdinand!’ this poor lady said, in a rare moment of emotion, on a New Year’s morning in Helios, to her beloved lord.

‘Ah yes, my love, and you are so always,’ said Ogier, with cordial kindness and admirable falsehood.

She shook her head sadly ; she was not deceived, and she mourned for the little house of twenty-five years before at Passy.

Meanwhile, whether pitied or envied, the poor Crown Princess bore her burden, and in due time was actually blessed by a male child.

It was a great occasion at the Palace of the Soleia. The President of the Council, the President of the Senate, the Prime Minister, the leader of the Opposition and other notabilities were gathered together in one of the vast tapestried and frescoed salons, with the electric lamps shining above their heads—some of these bald, some white, some grey, some dyed, but all deferentially bent in a listening and humble attitude for the news which another quarter of an hour must bring ; so at least a gynecologist, summoned there from Candor for the momentous occasion, had assured them. Now and then one or other of them murmured a sentence, or strove to conceal a yawn ; but no conversation could be kept up at such a juncture.

Suddenly the double doors were thrown open by gentlemen-lackeys, and the Crown Prince entered, taller, stiffer, redder than ever, more than ever with the port of a Hercules bearing the world upon his shoulders. As the eminent persons waiting there humbly bent to the ground before him, he announced, in pompous tones of unspeakable elation, that a prince

had been born to the nation, a son to him, an heir to the throne. With a certain condescension, added as a courteous colophon, he alluded to the hand of a merciful Creator in the auspicious event, and then he had a sound as of intoning in his voice.

Without, in the early evening, bells began to ring, cannon to fire, bands to play, bonfires to be lit on the hills around, the solemn, vision-haunted, god-forsaken hills of Helios ; and the people, with that fatal susceptibility and receptivity which throws a multitude into the dangerous magic of suggestivism, began to shout, to sing, to cheer, to rejoice for they knew not what, and gathered in uproarious thousands before the gates of the Soleia.

In answer to those outcries the short, stout, stiff figure of the King, and the spare, erect, stiff figure of the Crown Prince, appeared together upon the balcony above the great entrance, the light from the open windows behind them ; the crowd yelled its congratulations as the banner of the royal House swayed to and fro.

The Municipality presented a gold and tortoise-shell cradle ; the Provincial Council a perambulator in ivory and rare woods ; illuminated addresses were sent up from hundreds of mayors and prefects ; and a golden bowl, set round with pearls of price, for bread and milk, was offered by the Senate.

The King considered all these gifts as witnesses to his own popularity, and as so many gilded nails driven into the dais of his throne to strengthen it. The Crown Prince scarcely went so far as that ; he took them as a right.

A little later the most splendid pomp, and the most extravagant expenditure, attended the infant's baptism

in the Cathedral of St. Athanasius. He was named John Theodoric, and received the title of Prince of Helios. He was made colonel of a regiment of Guards and military governor of a province. The usual amnesty was granted in honour of his birth to condemned persons whose offences were not too flagrant, although no one, if put to it, could have explained the logic of so odd a connection as that between the birth of a babe and the national prisons and reformatories. An atom of flesh is born into the world, different in no way from all other flesh except in the superstitions and imaginations of men. This event is accompanied by the pardon of several thousands of incarcerated persons, and the cancelling of tens of thousands of punitive sentences and fines. Now it is clear that if the incarcerations were just, and just the fines, they should not be altered ; if unjust, that they should not have to wait to be redressed for the incident of an infant's birth. The usage makes a farce of law, and puppets of a magistracy. But the populace is never logical, and is easily moved to mawkish sentiment ; nor does it dislike to see justice in motley, and the gravity of law tricked out in cap and bells.

The winter, usually so mild in Helianthus, had become of great severity at this time. The mountain ranges were covered with snow, the plains were swept by icy and fierce winds, the blue sea was grey and sullen and murderous. So rare was such a season in this country that people were unprepared for it, both in the towns and in the provinces ; neither their houses nor their clothes were made to resist its sharpness ; the angry waters swallowed up the slender, shell-like fishing boats, and the frozen hills and vales



killed the lambs, the kids, the calves, the sheep, and the troops of wild young hares were famished on the frozen plains. Many human lives were also lost through the unfamiliar visitation. Men and women and children were found dead beneath churchyard walls, on ancient temple steps, on solitary shores, in lonely wattle huts, even in the lanes of cities with the cold electric-light shed on them. Cold, unusually prolonged, had already injured the olive and the orange harvest. Corn was taxed so highly that it was out of the reach of tens of thousands, and the chief bulk of it was shut up in huge granaries belonging to syndicates who would not sell, knowing it would go up higher and higher in price as the people suffered more. Children lay dead in the fireless cabins, mere heaps of bones and yellow skin. Feeble throngs, hollow of eye and cheek, and burnt up with fever, collected before the communal palaces in their little towns, clamouring for food, and got enough for two out of two score. The bright yellow discs of the coltsfoot and the celandine filled the ditches in the opening of the year, and amidst them lay dead bodies killed by hunger or from indigestion through eating balls of clay.

There were numerous subscriptions, headed by the donations of the king and closed by those of his tradesmen, as a child's procession of Noah's Ark animals is headed by the elephant and closed by the rabbit. Large sums of money passed through many hands and many channels, although not much of it reached its destination; and throughout the more northern provinces, and in the mountainous districts, the people lay fleshless and stark on the roads and in the barren fields.

The people should have been reconciled to their fate, no doubt, in thinking of the tortoise-shell and gold cradle, of the pearls, and furs, and laces, and lawns given to the new-born prince; but, alas, they were so ignorant that they did not know of them, and so had not even this consolation. Many of them did not even know that the Prince of Helios had been born, so that the agony of their empty bellies and gnawing bowels was not even alleviated by the national joy. In the far mountains by the lonely lakes, on the solitary plains of the interior, the population was sparse and widely scattered; the news of the new-born Gunderöde did not reach these through any channel until such time as their priest included his hallowed name in public prayer.

Amidst all this flutter and flurry in honour of her son, poor Princess Gertrude pressed the small red crumpled face of her babe to her bosom, of which the milk was denied to him, and regretted that she was not a woman of the people, free to do with her offspring as she chose: the wife of a weaver, of a cobbler, of a tailor, of some worker in sulphur mine or mariner in sailing-brig, only not forced to yield up her little son to an alien breast and to the arms of hirelings.

But for the first time in her life she was happy and proud, and could feel that her lord was content with her. For the first time her heart was closed to the woes of others. Possibly if she had gone into the ruined districts she might have been more painfully conscious of what was being suffered in them; but statistics and official returns do not touch the heart unless the heart be accompanied by a

very vivid imagination, and the imagination is a sensitive plant which withers in palaces. She was happy, for the first time in her life, proud of her boy, and glad to see her husband so contented and so triumphant; her one duty had been to bear him an heir, and she had now done that duty after twelve years of a marriage almost as bad as barren. She was sorry, indeed, for the hunger of the south and the north whenever she thought about it; but intensely sorry she could not feel. The universe was concentrated for her in the little red wrinkled morsel of flesh, slobbering and slumbering in his cradle under draperies of Old English point. He was her baby, her heaven-born, her latest and sweetest treasure; but he was much more than this in her sight: he was the future king. For her the infant's toothless, shapeless lips were touched by a sacred chrism.

'You too—even you!' thought Othyris, as he saw her absorption in the little heir: even she, good soul as she was, had been drawn into the vortex of selfish concentration.

He could say nothing to her, for anything he would have said in the sense of reproach for her selfishness would have sounded like disappointment and rancour.

Undoubtedly the cruelty of the lot of the many, the waste and self-indulgence in the lives of the few, were, when she thought of them, very painful and perplexing to her. She could not attempt to account for the anomaly satisfactorily; she accepted it as a sorrowful mystery—which it is not very difficult to do when the sorrowful mystery does not starve ourselves or our own children. That her own order was

in any way the cause of such disparities she would have indignantly denied, and probably with justice. But, as a rule, she did not either generalise or analyse; she referred such painful problems to the omniscience of the All-Supreme.

Yet, alas! the Providence in whom she believed so humbly and devoutly was unkind to her; her little son was not more sacred to it than the starved babes in the famine districts; and whether fools or sages were his worshippers, both were unable to keep alive the little scion of the House of Gunderöde.

It has never been explained satisfactorily by either philosophers or pathologists why nature is such an anarchist that she allows royal babes to be subject to croup; it is clearly wrong in the divine ordering of things, and is a problem which must greatly trouble and confound the mind of the true royalist. But, unfortunately, the fact is that royal infants are not more respected by disease than those of the population of the slums, and it so happened that the poor little Prince of Helios died after an illness of a few hours, suffocated by this common malady like any common child, and the Crown Princess mourned him as any ordinary mother might have done. His name had scarcely been included in the rubric of the priesthood and the prayers of the nation, before it ceased to be anything more than an inscription upon a tomb. The poor little fellow died at five months old; the length of his names and the weight of his honours were powerless to keep him alive; he actually died of suffocation, just like any forlorn atom breathing its last on a bed of rags, despite the science and the efforts of all the physicians of the Court.

‘Poor mother! Poor mother!’ thought Othyris

as he heard the tidings. How cruel was life—making the women lose what has cost them such pangs to bear and bring forth !

He who had felt the fetters which bound him to the throne lightened by the child's birth, felt them return in all their might at his death. He was once more Heir-Presumptive to the throne of Helianthus. The shadow of the purple hung like a rain-cloud upon the horizon of his life.

A mortuary chapel of great beauty and riches was consecrated to the child's memory, and his image in solid silver was enshrined in it as well as his silver coffin. Candles burned, and bells rang, and flowers bloomed above his tomb night and day, and innumerable young children of his age died of the poisoned milk of mothers employed in the factories of deadly trades. Yet neither his parents nor his grandfather would, by any stretch of imagination, have been able to conceive why the industrial classes are attracted by anarchistic doctrines !

King John was driving home, after a day's shooting with two of his gentlemen, when about a mile off the city gate on the north shots were fired at him by three young men hiding behind a myrtle hedge on the roadside. All the shots missed him, and struck the boughs of an opposite plane-tree. The young men fired again, but two were seized in the act by the carabineers who rode close to the carriage ; the third fled across the fields, and momentarily escaped, only to be captured later on, hidden in a disused water-tank.

The King returned to the Palace, and ate his dinner with an undiminished appetite. The youths were

escorted by police and gendarmes to the city prison for malefactors, and the attempt becoming known, the evening journals hastily printed 'specials' and the Prefect and Syndic as hastily organised thanksgivings. The great cathedral bells rang, and the palace square was illuminated and thronged. The King, when he had finished his dinner, went out on to the balcony above the great portico, accompanied by the Crown Prince, and remained there for a quarter of an hour, his figure black against the light of the room behind him; standing bareheaded and making signs of acknowledgment with his right hand, the spark of a lighted cigar between his lips as usual.

The crowd cheered, and some of the women in it sobbed with hysteria; for an attempted assassination, like a death-bed repentance, sends up the value of a perfectly useless and uninteresting life, and floats it upwards to the empyrean, as a balloon on the mere cutting of ropes soars by the force of gas into the clouds and above them.

The morning papers described and illustrated the scene by the plane-tree, writing with enthusiasm of the wonderful self-possession of the King, and sold largely. They also stated that the populace had tried to lynch the criminals on the way to the prison, which was quite untrue; and that there had been discovered indisputable evidence of an extensive international conspiracy, which was not true either, but was a *communiqué*: a lie of the police, not of the Press.

The lads were said to be dangerous anarchists; and, as usual, it was stated that an electrical thrill of horror had galvanised the whole of the universe.

John of Gunderöde himself took the matter calmly but very seriously, and expected every one to do the same ; and his private cypher and his private wires worked incessantly for several days.

The Red Spectre always haunts the beds and the brains of sovereigns. The roar of the cheering crowds is so terribly similar to the roar of a revolted population ; the press of the multitudes through the streets to see a State procession so painfully suggests what the stress and haste would be to see a fugitive monarch, a burning palace, an improvised scaffold. The guffaw of a grinning mob differs so little in its expression from the howl of a crowd that is cursing and clamouring for blood. The monarchs may give their coachmen or their postillions, or their footmen on the footboard, revolvers in each pocket ; they may brave ridicule by mounting gendarmes on bicycles behind them ; they may wear coats of mail under their cambric shirts ; they may have ton weights of iron chains, and rows of dark cells in their prisons under the sea level, where no ray of daylight ever comes, ready for their foes when captured. But all these precautions cannot rid them of the Red Spectre ; of the ever-present personal fear of assassination which chills their blood even in the warmth of a summer garden, of a friend's embrace, or of a bridal bed.

It was this fear which gave to the eyes of John of Gunderöde that strange expression of menace, of apprehension, of painful expectancy, and of scared vision, which made men doubt whether he had in fact the stolid bull-dog courage which was always attributed to him, and which was a characteristic of his race. In reality he had it ; he was naturally

brave, with a cynical, cool courage, hard and unsympathetic, like all his other faculties. But when the fear of assassination has once entered into a man it never leaves him ; it lies down with him at night, and gets up with him in the morning, like an incurable disease. It looks out from his regard always *en vedette*, always apprehensive, always glancing to right and to left like the regard of the oft-hunted stag. John of Gunderöde knew that this look had passed into his own eyes, reflex of a haunting thought in his brain ; and to conceal it he kept his eyelids half closed, or used a double eyeglass, for which his sight had no need.

It is remarkable that the great ones of the earth, when they escape from a danger, always praise the Deity as having watched over and guided them out of it ; but when they fall a victim to a revolver, or a dagger, or a bomb, they are never said by their families to have been deserted, or punished, by their Heavenly Father ; the most that is said then, is that the ways of God are mysterious and inscrutable. So, as the three youths had all and each of them missed the anointed of their land, every one in the Court circle and out of it was loud in their admiration of the conspicuous intervention of Deity. It was the Almighty Power which had made the lads' sight fail, and their hands tremble, at the critical moment, and the bullets fail to find their billets.

'It would have been better,' said Othyris, 'if the Almighty Power had intervened to prevent the lads' purchase of the pistols.'

'What a dreadful thing to say !' cried the Crown Princess, to whom he made the remark. She was a religious person ; her early training had been



Evangelical, and she really saw the finger of Providence distinctly in the fact that all three bullets had hit the plane-tree instead of reaching her father-in-law.

‘It seems to me an indisputable fact,’ replied Othyris.

‘You would say, then,’ she continued, ‘that Christ should have prevented Lazarus dying, instead of raising him from the tomb?’

‘I imagine it would have been kinder to Lazarus,’ said Othyris.

She was still more shocked.

‘It is so sad,’ she murmured, ‘so grievously sad, that you are so Voltairean!’

Othyris laughed.

‘Oh, surely I am of a later date than Voltaire? And I am not so meritorious as he,’ he added. ‘I have not yet saved my Calas.’

‘Perhaps you will feel it your duty to save these three assassins?’

‘If there were a chance that I could do so, I would try to save them from a violent death.’

‘You cannot speak seriously.’

‘I do, indeed. Should I jest on such a subject?’

‘On what grounds would you save them?’

‘On many. That they are young; that they were deluded; that they had hitherto borne good characters; that their shots all missed their mark; that no harm was done; and, beyond all, that a ruler should always be merciful and magnanimous.’

‘But it is owing to the country to set an example.’

‘Oh, the poor country! We owe it so many things that we never pay to it! Surely an example of clemency is the highest example that can be set?’

‘Clemency is a great virtue, no doubt,’ said his sister-in-law, sorely troubled in her ethics, as good women often are. ‘And I am sure your father would be inclined to exercise it.’

Othyris was silent. He thought that when his father should show clemency the marble lions on the quay would walk.

‘If he were sure that it would be understood,’ she added. ‘Not misinterpreted. The people are so apt to take kindness as meaning fear.’

‘The people are not often tried in that way. We are always *à cheval* on our rights, using them as the Cossacks their knouts. The King would be the last man to lay down his knout.’

‘The King will do nothing in the matter himself. He will follow what his Ministers advise, and what the judges of his Courts may decide ; he will allow the law to take its course, that is all he will do ; he will exercise no personal power, he will give no personal opinion.’

‘But it is precisely in such a matter as this that he could use his personal influence usefully and well. He is the offended person, he was the intended victim ; he would possess an absolute right to be as merciful as his wishes might lead him to be. In these matters, with people in general, the common law is inexorable. It does not allow the person injured to save the injurer, or the intending injurer, from legal punishment. It is one of the most caustic satires on Christian nations that no man may forgive his own injuries if once the law has got hold of them ; that no man is allowed to rescue his enemies from the sentence passed on them by others. But the King has this advantage over all other men, that he

can, if he please, pardon and set free his foes. He can use his prerogative to annul the capital sentence of the law. True, in general usage, this right is exercised on his behalf by the Minister of Justice; but he can at any time exercise it himself; and what time would be so fitting as this, when the accused (who will be to-morrow the condemned) have been guilty of a personal offence against himself, and are scarcely more than mere boys in years? I am quite sure that such an act would be not only generous but most politic, most wise. It would go to the heart of the people of Helianthus.'

The Crown Princess sighed and dropped stitches in her stocking.

'What you say is most touching, and in a measure quite true, but, my dear Elim, it is not by the heart that a sovereign can rule; it is by the head. It is sometimes more salutary (even in the end more merciful) to inspire terror than affection. The populace may applaud a romantic benevolence; but what they obey is, alas, that which they fear.'

'He is called the father of his people!' said Othyris bitterly.

'Fathers must chasten,' said his sister-in-law.

'But fathers do not slay their sons! In the power to exercise mercy, there seems to me to lie the supreme privilege of royalty; but no one in our day uses it. The Code is the only Holy Writ.'

'The Code is the supreme law of the country!' said his sister-in-law.

'No doubt, and perhaps the judges could not give any other verdict, the law being what it is; but it is precisely in such a case that the royal prerogative of mercy might be exercised; that

"Go, and sin no more," might be said by the head of the State.'

She sighed again, and her needles clicked nervously in the silence. She was by nature full of kind and tender instincts, but these had been steeped in an atmosphere of conventionality and absolutism till they were dry and stiff, the life crushed out of them under the pressure, like flowers in a *hortus siccus*.

Othyris looked at her with some derision, and some compassion, and with a sense of infinite sadness. Herself, she would not have hurt a fly, or have ever avenged the cruellest wound; but she had been so trained and so saturated with prejudice, that she could see only justice in a judicial murder, and only strength and right in an inexorable vengeance. What use was it to argue with one whose mind was closed to argument as a battened-down port-hole is closed to the surging of the sea-waves? Hundreds of times had he renewed such discussions with her, only to be met by that calm resistance of a narrow obstinacy which regarded itself as a religious duty.

'Look at me and answer me, Gertrude,' he said after long silence. 'Do you seriously believe that it is either right, or necessary, or wise, to kill, in cold blood, three youths under twenty years of age for an abortive attempt which did no harm to any one or anything?'

She raised her head and looked at him.

'It is a question of State which it does not become me to discuss or to decide. Nor does it become you, my dear brother-in-law. Remember, Elim, if you make yourself the apologist of your father's enemies there are many who will remark

that his death would have left only one other life between you and the throne.'

A hot flush of indignation rose over his face.

'You!' he exclaimed. 'You can say this horrible thing to me, or think it?'

'I neither say nor think it, dear Elim. I say that there are many who will attribute base motives to your defence of the anarchists who attempted your father's life. It is not the part of a son, it is not the part of a prince, to defend such persons. They have their own legal defenders. Leave them to those.'

'You, a religious woman, half a saint, do not believe in the supreme obligation of acting according to one's convictions whatever construction may be put on those? You do not believe that the exercise of mercy is the most divine attribute of a human character?'

'It is not either you or I who can exercise it in this instance, and neither you nor I can be entitled to criticise the actions of one whose first subjects we both are, and to whose measures we are both bound to give an implicit and unquestioning respect.'

'Respect a brutal vengeance? Where are the precepts of your religion?'

'Hush! Hush! You distress me unspeakably. You should not even think such things in the solitude of your chamber.'

'If I must neither think nor act, if my utterances on their behalf would only confirm and hasten the death-warrant of those unhappy boys, I will leave the country, in order that I may not hear the weeping of their mothers, and the sound of the quicklime being thrown on their young bodies.'

‘To leave the kingdom you must have your father’s consent, both as your king and your commanding officer.’

‘I am a slave, then!’

‘Acquiescence in duty is not slavery.’

‘I decline to see duty where you see it. What you call duty is a mere fetish to which you sacrifice and slay all your best instincts, all your most humane impulses, all your upright honesty of purpose, all the sensitive feelers of your conscience.’

‘I do not think so,’ said his sister-in-law calmly; and she moved her knitting needles in and out with even measure; she had been disturbed and troubled for a moment by his arguments, but she had now regained her placid and unquestioning belief in the dogma perpetually taught to her from her cradle.

‘You ought to pity these boys as you pity misguided children.’

‘Of course one pities them, in a sense. One pities all guilty persons. But one must be careful not to allow one’s compassion to blind one’s sense of right and wrong.’

‘Hate the sin and love the sinner. Is not that what one ought to do?’

Princess Gertrude shuddered.

‘Love a regicide?—oh, my dear Elim! Christ Himself would not enjoin that.’

‘Why is a regicide worse than any other murderer?’

‘Pray, if you think such things, do not say them to me.’

‘Well, tell me why? Argue with me—do not muzzle me!’

But she was obstinately mute. The subject

seemed to her too horrible, too blasphemous, too diabolical, to be discussed in speech. That the son of a king should think the assassination of a king a crime on the same level as the murder of a shoebblack or a shepherd, appeared to her impious.

‘Really, I cannot listen to you when you are in such terrible moods as this,’ she said nervously. ‘A king is the Lord’s Anointed! His person is sacred.’

‘Indeed?’ said Othyris, with sarcastic incredulity. ‘Then it ought also to be invulnerable. A sovereign ought not even to have the heel of Achilles. But he has.’

She was silent; she dared not blame Providence for not having made monarchs bullet-proof. Yet she could not either assert that they were so. It was one of those mysteries which she was accustomed to put away in the innermost chambers of her mind, in faith and fear, there unexamined to await the will of the Most High for explanation.

## CHAPTER XII

ALMOST the only person in Helios whom Elim, Duke of Othyris, counted as his friend was, paradoxically enough, the editor of a small newspaper of pronounced republican sympathies. Ednor was a scholar and a liberty-loving enthusiast ; on both of which accounts his lot in Helios was an unhappy one. He wrote all the articles for his little journal himself, and the views which were expressed in its columns frequently earned for him the imposition of heavy fines and even occasional periods of imprisonment or exile. When he was fortunate enough to have his freedom, he lived in a garret in the poorest and lowest quarter of the town ; and there Othyris used to visit him as frequently as he could manage to do so without attracting attention.

On one of these visits, in the summer after the fall of the Ivory Tower, Ednor happened to mention that he had just been to see Platon Illyris, the old hero who had freed Helianthus from the foreign yoke half a century before, but whose glorious victories in the War of Independence his former comrade-in-arms, the first Theodoric, had basely utilised, at the psychological moment, to seize the vacant throne for the House of Gunderöde. To Ednor's great astonishment Othyris appeared not to



be aware of the fact that Illyris was now living in obscurity and retirement close to Helios.

‘Is it possible, sir,’ he asked Othyris, ‘that you did not know it?’

‘No, I never had a hint of it.’

‘The police know it : have known it for years.’

‘And my father, I suppose?’

‘No doubt the King must always have been aware of it.’

Othyris sprang to his feet, speaking with a determination he rarely displayed.

‘I will go and see Platon Illyris to-morrow ; he is the greatest man that Helianthus ever possessed.’

‘His greatness dates from very long ago.’

‘So does Homer’s,’ said Othyris, with irritation. Who was there in the present generation worthy to hold a lantern to light the steps of the old hero of Argileion and of Samaris ?

That he himself should have been ignorant of the presence in the country of such a man seemed to him almost criminal in its affront to a mighty past.

‘Sir,’ said Ednor, with hesitation, ‘your royal father is very adverse to your liberal opinions, to your protection of liberal thinkers, to your avowed antagonism to the existing institutions (to use the newspaper phrase) ; he will remember (if you forget) that Platon Illyris was put in chains by your grand-sire, the late sovereign, Theodoric. For you, sir, to visit him—will it be prudent?’

‘That is not a question I ask myself.’

‘No ; but when others are involved, might you not ask it?’

Othyris was surprised.

‘How could my visit hurt him? It might be held to compromise me, but not him.’

‘I fear that it would do both, sir.’

Othyris rose with some impatience; when contradicted he was apt to remember that he was a prince.

‘My father, the King, holds what views he thinks right. I hold mine. Had I dreamed that the hero of Argileion was dwelling near Helios, he should not have waited so long for the little I can do to show him my profound respect.’

Ednor sighed and desisted from argument.

Such a visit seemed to him a great imprudence, certain to cause great risk of troublous entanglements, but he saw that to attempt to dissuade Othyris from it would be waste of words. The utmost he could hope to do would be to endeavour to have this imprudence kept secret, or, at the least, minimised.

Othyris bade his friend adieu and descended the break-neck staircase rapidly; he said to himself, ‘What is worth doing at all, is best done quickly’; and he went out into the street, where the amber light of a summer afternoon was shining on the uneven stones, the moss-grown walls, the many-coloured rags. He was free from all serious engagements. Women were awaiting him at more than one afternoon reception, and longing for the presence of ‘*le bel Elim*,’ ‘*l’Altesse frisé*,’ ‘*le Duc doré*,’ ‘*le Prince charmant*’; but the disappointment he would inflict on these fair creatures did not touch him greatly.

That afternoon, by a rare chance, he found himself free and alone. So fortunate a coincidence might not, he knew, occur again for weeks. He took it as it offered; and hastened to leave the quarter he was in, which was the poorest and lowest,

the Montmarte and the Marais, of Helios, and go out by the north gate towards the slopes of the Helichrysum hills, the spurs of the great mountain range called Mount Atys. A few persons recognised him, and uncovered their heads as he passed; but for the greater part of the way he was left unnoticed, much to his satisfaction. It never occurred to the majority that this pedestrian could possibly be a prince. The people never easily understand that those who can ride or drive at pleasure may possibly prefer to walk. Those who are deprived of all luxury can never comprehend that luxury may become monotonous and tiresome.

Most of the dwellers in these streets were engaged in their various daily labours, but the old dark houses with grated windows and iron-plated doors were gay with many-coloured rags and climbing plants blossoming over their balconies; mediæval lanthorns swung on chains from their walls, and storks were building their nests on the roofs; beautiful olive-skinned children rolled in play with merry dogs on the uneven stones, and old men and women slept on the steps of churches which had once been classic temples; and, ever and again (the singer unseen), some soft sweet voice was heard, falling down through the air, as a nightingale's, in showers of liquid sound. In these quarters the King's second son was well known, but few recognised him as he went rapidly and alone up the steep, uneven, paven highway which led to the lower slopes of Mount Atys.

Once outside the barrier of the town, with its high grey walls and its great entrance-gate, called the Gate of Olives, the soft and radiant landscape

without broke full upon his sight, the terraces of the olive plantations rising one above each other in lofty tiers, their sad, silver-grey foliage relieved at frequent intervals by the white blossoms of the wild peach- and pear-trees. The day was brilliant, and its full beauty faced him as he passed the guards of the town, the customs-officials, and the soldiers standing sentinel under the portcullis of the city gates, who all hastened in eager obsequiousness to salute him and to present arms. Once beyond these huge Cyclopean walls and ponderous iron doors, he was alone with the rural solitudes, which on this side of the town were not marred by any modern agriculture or vulgarity-exhaling suburban erections.

The grass of the fields grew close up to the city bastions, and the rivulets ran down from the woods to fill their moat. Othyris drew in with a deep breath the aromatic air which blew freshly from the mountains and valleys of the alps of Atys, and thought that he was much better here than in the perfumed and crowded drawing-rooms of the great ladies of Helios, flattered and wooed by honeyed lying lips, and bound to lie sweetly to the liars in return. It was rarely at this season that he could escape thus into the solitude and freshness of the country, and the escape was the more delightful to him from its rarity, and its vague forbidden flavour of the *école buissonnière*.

In an aged pear-tree by the roadside two golden orioles were at work on a half-made nest among the white clusters of the blossoms; he paused and watched them, then went on his way the happier for the sight.

The olive woods needed little culture. There were no labourers under the trees. Peasants were few and

far between upon these hills. The sylvan solitudes were in perfect repose. The murmur of the sea was audible in the stillness, but the sea was unseen. In the distance, thrusting their grand heads into the white cirrus clouds, were the high crests of the snow mountains, blue as sapphires, spiritual and glorious as the dream-palaces which poets visit in their sleep.

A narrow footpath wound upward for several miles between the trees and the great boulders of granite and marble, and led to the district which was known as *Aquilegia*. The way was strange to *Othyris*, and he met no one; but he had been carefully directed by *Ednor*; and at a certain point indicated, where an old moss-grown conduit covered a water-spring, which trickled down and crossed the hill-road, he came in sight of a low white house, with two cedars of *Lebanon* towering behind it, and with a group of black poplars interrupting the growth of the olive-trees. He stood still and looked at it with emotion.

To him it looked scarcely more than a cattle-shed, this little, obscure dwelling, which sheltered the greatest life in *Helianthus*, whilst he and his were lodged in the grand palaces, the mighty castles, the villas, the parks, the gardens, to which they had no more title than the hunter to the condor's nest, the angler to the beaver's dam!

*Othyris* stood still a few moments, looking up at the vast, straight stems of the cedars, sentinels set by nature over the grave of a buried genius. Then he went forward, and upward, until he came upon the clear space of rough grass which stretched before the house. He saw no one; but the door of the house stood open, and he heard the sound of some one

unseen on the other side of the house, drawing up a bucket from a well.

He hesitated a few moments, wondering if he should offend: the sins of his forefathers felt like lead upon his spirit. In whose name, by what title, did he venture there?

It was a square house, chiefly built of the blocks of marble of a ruined temple, and ennobled by a fine and ancient frieze along its frontage, representing the history of the Golden Fleece. There was no garden; but on the rough grass surrounding the house there grew many rose-bushes and myrtle-bushes; the rest of the hillside was a forest of olives—olives old, unpruned, with great gnarled trunks, beneath which the flowers of spring delighted to live sheltered and to blossom unmolested.

There were here and there between them some gigantic oaks and some aged laurels. Between the dark grey olive wood and the pale grey olive foliage, the sea, visible from this height, sparkled in sunshine and fumed in storm, the semicircle of the dazzling city curving in sight on the eastern side of the bay.

A very large dog of the Ulmer breed, lying on the threshold, rose and advanced with an angry growl and a deep rolling bay.

Othyris put out his hand.

‘Good dog, I come in true faith.’

A voice, from the casement immediately above, called to the dog.

‘Ajax, Ajax, be quiet!’

The dog looked up to some invisible speaker, obeyed and was silent, standing on the watch, half-reassured, half-doubtful.

‘Ajax, be friends with me,’ said Othyris. ‘I am a friend of your race.’

The great dog allowed himself to be caressed.

Othyris looked up to the narrow aperture above, which had a sculptured coping and an iron grating; ivy and the Madonna’s herb hung all about it, so that it was partially concealed by them. He could not see the speaker who had called to Ajax, and the dwelling seemed deserted; it had no sign of life except the great dog and the innumerable swallows flying in and out of its verdure, above its roof, and between the trees around it.

It was solitary and solemn, as befitted the tomb of a great renown which men had slighted and forgotten. Illyris, like Isis, who had been worshipped there, had no place in the world of living men; the fires which had burned on so many altars for him were cold as those which had flamed for her.

Othyris, receiving no further opposition from the dog, ventured across the marble step of the entrance. He found himself in a small, stone-paved passage, with a square window, which opened on to the myrtle-bushes and the unclipt roses. An inner door to the left, also open, showed him a room lined and filled with books; in a great black leather chair an old man was seated, a large volume on his knee. Othyris knew that he must see before him Platon Illyris.

He crossed the threshold, and bowed low, very low, before that mighty figure.

‘What do you want here, whoever you are?’ asked the occupant of the chamber, in a voice still deep and firm.

‘I wished to see Platon Illyris,’ said Othyris.

‘Indeed!’ said the old man, with a sceptical irony in his tone. ‘And who may you be that wants to see dead men?’

Othyris hesitated; he knew that the name of his House stunk in the nostrils of Illyris. But to lie or prevaricate to the old hero was repugnant to him; it seemed unworthy. He hesitated a moment longer, then said:

‘Sir, I am the second son of the King. I am Elim of Gunderöde. Men call me the Duke of Othyris.’

The face of Illyris grew stern and dark; his broad brows contracted; his stooping form rose erect in his chair.

‘Young prince,’ he said harshly, ‘you do ill to dig dead men out of their graves. I am in mine. Let me be.’

‘No. Let me speak with you a little while.’

‘Wherefore? A son of your House can be nought to me except an usurper, a tyrant, a stranger.’

‘That I understand. To you, it must of necessity seem so. It was not to build up our throne that you gave your blood and your brethren.’

The old man looked at him with the keenness of other days lighting up his eyes.

‘Such words are strange in your mouth. You are the great-grandson of the traitor Theodoric.’

Othyris coloured and winced at the words, but he did not resent them.

A tremor of remembrance and rage passed through the old man’s large and bony frame. He made a movement of both hands, as of one who pushes away some unclean and clinging thing.

‘You are Princes in Helianthus,’ he said harshly,



‘let that content you. Do not grudge me a runlet of cold water, a stone cell, a book, the air of the hills. Get you gone, young man. Go back to your purple and fine linen.’

‘Sir,’ said Othyris, ‘if those things satisfied me, should I be here?’

‘Who knows? Idlers go to gape at a sick and sightless lion in his cage. I was a lion once, but your great-grandsire’s nets were stronger than was my strength. Get you gone.’

But Othyris lingered, standing before the venerable figure with the folio volume open on its knees.

He had come, humbly, as a scholar and disciple, when he might have come with pomp and power; he had come as a suppliant, when he might have come in authority; he had come with his heart in his hand, strongly moved and voluntarily putting aside his high estate;—and he was received as an intruder who had broken in where he had no right to enter. He controlled his irritation and mortification with difficulty; keeping always before him, as check upon his anger, his strong sense of the great wrongs done by those of his blood to Platon Illyris, and to the nation for which the aged hero had fought and suffered.

‘If he struck me,’ he thought, ‘he would be within his rights.’ So it seemed to him.

A tame dove flew in over the myrtles and settled on the shoulder of Illyris, fluttering her wings and cooing softly.

‘If I wrung this creature’s neck I should be a traitor,’ said the old man. ‘The dove of Helianthus flew thus to your great-grandsire, and he first caressed, then choked her.’

'Sir,' said Othyris, 'I have said I abhor the crimes of my race. Is it fair, then, to reproach me with them? The worst was done long before my birth. In what is done now, I have no more voice than that bird on your shoulder.'

'You are of the hawk's brood. There is a Gallic proverb : *On chasse de race.*'

'Many were traitors as well as he, were they not?' he answered. 'The nation was not true to itself. Were nations true to themselves could any man ever enslave them?'

Platon Illyris struck his clenched hand on the marble of the window-seat beside him.

'Where had there been a nation here except for me? And your grandsire repaid me with a cell in the fortress of Constantine.'

'Sir, I know,' said Othyris, with profound humility. 'It was the blackest of all the crimes of that time, because the most ungrateful. But visit it not on me. I burn with shame for it. I come hither to ask your pardon for it. It should cling like the shirt of Nessus to my race. I do not see these things as my relatives see them. I have thought for myself, and I cannot go, unless you say that you forgive my people.'

'And if I said it, what would the falsehood profit you?'

'What does a blessing profit? It is a breath, an idea, a murmur, a nothing; yet it may change remorse to peace.'

'There is no remorse to change where there has been success.'

'Sir, how can you tell? The death-bed of Theodoric of Gunderöde was visited by many ghosts.'

I have heard old servants relate how, in the dead of night, unable to rest for the phantoms of his own thoughts and fears, he wandered sleepless and scared down the cypress alleys of Soleia, crying on dead men to pardon him, and on hell to spare him.'

Illyris was silent. His mind was far away in memories long untouched by any call to recollection.

'I have read the history of our past and of yours,' said Othyris. 'You, sir, are the great hero of that epopee, and your sword, not his, cut the cords which bound Helianthus to the knees of the foreign ruler. Helianthus should have been yours, not his.'

The finely-formed hands of Illyris, the yellow-white of ivory, on which the veins stood out like ropes, closed with force on the arms of his chair.

'Ay!' he said bitterly; 'she had been mine had I so willed, perhaps; but at what a cost, what a cost! The war of brethren for long years of strife; an endless duel between the sons of the same mother. They would have made me ruler after Argileion and Samaris. They would have put the purple on my shoulders here in Helios, yonder; but I was no traitor to my country; I left betrayal to Theodoric of Gunderöde.'

Othyris grew very white; what he heard now was no more than he had known before, than he had thought for himself in his boyhood; but it wounded him cruelly to hear it said by another, and that other the victim of the ingratitude of his race.

'He would have had no victory but for me,' said Illyris, 'and he repaid me by captivity and exile. But that would have been of little matter if he had been true to the nation; but he was false to her! False as hell! If I had chosen,' he muttered, 'if I

had chosen, Theodoric had never reigned in my country.'

'I know it, sir,' said Othyris.

Illyris looked at him in doubt and with harsh scrutiny.

'You are of his blood. You enjoy the fruits of his perfidy.'

'That is true,' said Elim, with humility. 'But I am not blind; I am not a sophist. My conscience is not to be bought.'

'That which he betrayed were not merely men: it was the nation, it was the country,' said Illyris, not heeding him. 'Judas—Judas—Judas! He entered the land as a soldier of liberty; he reigned, he lived, he died, a king. What he did to me mattered nothing. I was but a human beast like himself. But the land was holy, and he betrayed it! The land had received him with hope as a virgin her bridegroom, and as a wedding gift he brought misery and bondage to the innocent who had trusted him.'

He had risen from his seat in the force of his passion; his voice regained almost the strength of its early maturity; his sunken eyes blazed, and his Olympian brows seemed clothed with thunder.

Othyris stood before him as a young and timid pilgrim may have stood before the Zeus, with the lightnings in flame about his head. He spoke no word; he dared offer no defence; he knew that every syllable of the reproach was true. Had he not said these same things in his own thoughts ever since the earliest years of the garbled lessons given him in the story of his race, and in the share it had played in the liberation of the country?

Theodoric had been a fine soldier; when he had

cried to his troops, 'Follow, follow, follow, children !' they had gone headlong after the gleam of his naked sabre, and would have followed him into the jaws of hell itself. But ambition is like a solvent acid ; in it all pure and precious qualities dissolve and disappear ; and the joy of adding territory to territory, treasure to treasure, title to title, is as a crucible in which all other feelings are burnt up and perish ; it is an appetite which has the passions of the miser, of the conqueror and of the lover, all fused into one.

'If you like not to hear these truths of the man who bred you and yours why come you hither, young prince ?'

'They *are* truths, sir,' said Elim wearily, 'and I am tired of phrases and of falsehoods.'

The old hero looked at him with keen but not unkind gaze.

'Come out from a Court, then, and dig for your daily bread. But you have been bred and begotten by tyrants. If you are the son of John of Gunderöde, you have the blood in you also of the tyrant Gregory.'

The face of Othyrus flushed painfully.

'My mother was a saint.'

'She was a good and innocent woman, no doubt,' said Illyris, more gently ; 'you do well to cherish her memory.'

Othyrus was silent. A great and painful emotion held him mute.

The old man looked at him with searching keenness in his still, clear eyes. 'What can bring you here ?' he muttered ; 'what link can there be between an Illyris and a Gunderöde ?'

'Sir,' said Othyrus, without resentment, 'there is my reverence for you. It is sincere. May it not

serve to atone in me for a birth which is no fault of mine ?’

‘That is strange language on a Gunderöde’s tongue.’

‘Forget that I am a Gunderöde. Think of me as a neophyte, as a volunteer like those who followed your army.’

Illyris was moved, but he was incredulous.

‘Half a century and more has gone by since I had my army behind me. The bones of my legions lie fleshless in the ground. I am a cripple who scarce can move across this narrow room. Get you gone. You have the blood in you of Theodoric. I know not whether you mock me, or whether you speak in sincerity. Youth is honest sometimes, but what friendship can there be between myself and you? I believed in your great-grandsire’s word, and he lied to me and betrayed me. I fought with him, and he stabbed me in the back. He stole my bride, my love, my queen, my Helianthus. He violated her on what he called her nuptial bed. He called himself her choice when he was but her ravisher. He called himself the Perseus of her Andromeda, and he was but the Minotaur. Think you my own fate would have mattered to me could I but have seen my country free, as I had seen her in the dreams of my youth—as I had seen her in my visions across the smoke of battlefields and the flames of burning cities? Did ever I hesitate to risk my body for her? Her cause was holy to me. I lost for it all that men hold dear. Wealth and land and learning, the peace of the hearth, the love of woman, the joys of offspring, were all as naught to me beside my country. And he—he—Theodoric—rendered all my losses vain, all

my life fruitless, all my aims empty and filled with ashes. What did he make of her? A vassal to himself; a waiter on the will of the great Powers; a victim of a mock plebiscite; a slave bound down under the drain of taxation, the hypocrisy of constitutionalism; a mere copy of the other kingdoms of the world. My own wrongs I would have forgiven to him unto seventy times seven; but the wrongs of my country—my country which was never his except by fraud and force—I would not forgive, though God Himself commanded!’

He breathed heavily, his eyes closed in exhaustion; the emotions and the wrongs of other years surged up in his memory and sapped his remaining strength; the torpor of great age succeeded the violence and eloquence aroused by the visit of the King’s son.

‘Sir,’ said the voice of a woman behind him, ‘leave him, I pray you, if indeed you came in sincerity. He will say no more to you to-day. Your presence will only anger and distress him uselessly.’

Othyrus turned and saw her with surprise; he had supposed that the old man lived alone, and had not expected to find any other occupant of the hill house.

The beauty of her form and face, the repose and gravity of her manner, the seriousness and limpidity of her regard as her eyes met his, astonished him. It was not thus that women were wont to look at him.

‘I beg your pardon,’ he murmured; ‘I was not aware——’ He hesitated and coloured, moved to surprise and delight. In this young recluse of Aquilegia he recognised the Pallas Athene of the seashore, seen by moonlight a year earlier, on the occasion of his visit to the ruins of the Ivory Tower.

There was a moment's silence between them, but the embarrassment was on his side, not hers.

'You are one of the Princes?' she said, as he stood silent before her. 'I heard some of your latest words to my great-grandfather. Why did you come here? It was unkind, ill-judged.'

'Unkind!' repeated Othyrus. 'Unkindness was the last thing in my heart. Ill-judged? Why so? What is done in respect and sincerity cannot offend.'

'Sir, you brought the past with you, as a man brings his shadow. What can the past of your family be to Platon Illyris? Ask yourself.'

'It is because I am conscious of all it means to him that I am here.'

'Why? You cannot atone for it.'

'To atone is seldom given to us. We can only regret. I come in all sincerity and good faith to the greatest man of this country.'

'Sir, there is an impassable gulf between him and you. It is filled by the blood of his countrymen, of his brethren, of his friends.'

'I had no share in its making.'

'No; not you, but yours.'

'Lady, you are young to be so harsh.'

'I am not harsh, nor is he. Why did you come here, sir? Could you expect welcome or obeisance from us?'

'No; but I, even I, might expect justice.'

He controlled with difficulty his rising anger; the humility with which he had come hither had been sincere, even extreme in its sincerity; but long habit and the perpetual usage of daily life, the deference of the world and of all its classes to him and his, had



made him unconsciously expect consideration, even gratitude, in return.

‘Justice,’ she repeated slowly. How often is it invoked and invoked in vain! If royal races were, once or twice in the world’s history, denied it, could they complain? Is not the bread of injustice eaten beside millions of poor men’s cold hearths, all the year long, throughout the earth?

‘He would not be unjust even to you,’ she said with a movement of the hand towards the now motionless form of her relative. ‘You are not to blame for the accident of your birth, for the treacherous blood that you inherit. But stay down yonder in your rose-gardens. You have nothing to do with us. I am a working woman, and he is an old, very old man, well-nigh dead, and utterly forgotten.’

She passed out before him to the entrance and laid her right hand upon the door still standing open.

‘Go, sir,’ she said, and she pointed with her left hand to the path beneath the olive-trees. She was wholly unconscious of it, but the simplicity and the dignity of her attitude and gesture moved him to an amazed and intense admiration. The red reflection of the sun, then sinking into the sea amidst grand pomp of evening clouds, shone on the clear cold beauty of her face, its pure outline, its fair colour, its soft and thick dark hair, wound about her head in massive braids.

‘What a beautiful woman!’ he thought, ‘what a beautiful woman!’ and, still in all sincerity, but spurred by the longing to see more of her beauty, and to conquer her coldness, he drew back a moment

on the threshold, and met once more the calm gaze of her meditative eyes.

‘I am of the reigning House of Gunderröde, that House which is condemned and despised by you, and I dare offer no appeal against your sentence. But I am your great-grandfather’s most devoted disciple ; and I trust that time will honour me by giving me his confidence and yours.’

He bowed very low, as he had done to Platon Illyris, and went across the threshold of the outer hall, on to the rough grass-land without. She did not reply, but she closed the door as though to shut out his presence, and went within, calling the dog to her side.

Othyris retraced his steps to the city.

There was a great dinner that evening, followed by a Court ball, and he was barely in time to be in his place at the banquet. It was his office to lead the cotillion at the ball ; but its gay pranks and jests and figures jarred on him, and he sighed for the cool and fragrant silence of the woods of Aquilegia.

‘In other times,’ he thought, ‘princes kept fools to jest for them ; now we must play the fool ourselves from morn till night !’

## CHAPTER XIII

It was at an engagement near a hamlet called Turla that the army of Illyris, which had been weakened by great privations and exhausted by a long campaign in an already ravaged and burnt province, was defeated by the troops led by the first Theodoric; and with his horse killed under him, his strength sapped by long famine, and the few veterans of his guard dead or worn out around him, Illyris was taken prisoner by an overwhelming force.

When he was taken into the tent of Theodoric, the latter, who owed to him his entrance into Helianthus, came to meet him with both hands outstretched.

‘My old and honoured comrade,’ he said, in a tone of apology, ‘the fortunes of war change.’

Illyris, standing erect in his great height above the short, broad, stout figure of the head of the House of Gunderöde, put his hands behind his back, and beneath his eagle’s gaze the eyes of Theodoric fell.

‘The fortunes of war, yes,’ said Illyris, ‘but the laws of honour do not.’

Theodoric understood. His dark skin grew pale. He felt poor, and small, and mean, before this man who had driven the foreigner from the land and

asked no reward, who had given away a kingdom and was poor as Belissarius.

He offered but a feeble resistance when his Ministers urged on him that the captivity of Platon Illyris was a necessary condition for the pacification of the nation.

The fortress of Constantine received the liberator of Helianthus.

His imprisonment was made as honourable and as little onerous as imprisonment can ever be, but the cage to the lion is agony, and whether it be a few yards more or less wide matters not to the king of the desert.

From north to south, from east to west, the Helianthine people raged and fretted, and demanded the freedom of their hero ; but he was not restored to them. There were already on their newly-won liberties the bonds which accompany an accepted government ; and already they were powerless to break them asunder.

For five long years Illyris saw the sun rise and set over the Helianthine sea from the casements of the fortress of Constantine. Then his sentence was changed to exile, and secretly, lest the sight of him and the memory of him should excite the populace, he was conveyed to a steam vessel in the Bay of Helios, which was bound for a northern kingdom—a vessel chartered by the government of Theodoric on condition that she should put into no port betwixt Helios and her destination. The people would willingly have freed Illyris at any cost ; but they could neither see him nor speak with him ; they had no one to lead them ; they were like a rudderless boat ; and already in the country there was that

dominance of financial and commercial interests, that weight of personal egotism, that stream of blinding ambitions, which go with governments as vapours with a distillery.

So the Gunderöde reigned, and Illyris passed away.

When the young scions of the House of Gunderöde had been taught the history of the country their House reigned over, the name of Illyris had been at once blessed and cursed by those who had arranged and expunged and modified narratives of the War of Independence for their instruction, giving all the glory of the liberation from foreign occupation to Theodoric. Before he was fifteen years old, Othyrus had rectified the omissions of his text-books, and made of Illyris his hero ; but Tyras had never been enough interested in the past to do so.

‘Whoever plucked the pear we have eaten it,’ he sagely reflected ; and the eating seemed to him the principal exploit, as it seemed to the world in general.

No one could write or speak of the War of Independence without speaking of Illyris. But the government had striven to the uttermost to efface his name. In the public schools it was dwelt on as slightly as was possible by preceptors docile to those who appointed and could promote or dismiss them ; and in this matter the clerical joined hands with the lay teachers. The aged men who had been his contemporaries and his comrades became fewer and fewer with every year ; and a period which is neither near enough to possess the selfish interests of the present, nor far enough away to have gained the

venerable patina of time, is easily pushed aside. It is like a painting which has neither the freshness of modernity nor the mellowness of age. It is too well known, yet not known well enough.

For a part of his life after the accession of Theodoric Illyris had been perforce an exile ; but in the latter part of the reign of Theodoric's son and successor he was allowed to return, or rather his unauthorised return to his country was neither permitted nor prohibited, but tacitly allowed, by a government which ignored his existence except when its minions collected his hearth-tax. He lived outside the south gate of the city, on a hillside covered with olive orchards and forests, whence a large part of the southern bay of Helios was visible, and the glories of sunrise seemed with every daybreak to be the new birth of the world. The place was called Aquilegia, from the quantities of wild columbines which grew beneath its trees ; a temple with Ionian columns which was still standing in its higher woods had been in other ages consecrated to the worship of Isis and her son.

In this solitary place he dwelt, the world forgetting, by the world forgot, and was now over ninety years of age. He had been amongst the first and foremost of the popular leaders to deliver his country from a foreign yoke, and he had lived to see that the only form of liberty ever awarded to men is an exchange of tyrannies. The pack-saddle is shifted from the mule's back, only for the sack of coals to be placed on it instead ; the burden alters in kind and in name, not in weight.

This knowledge, and the pains in old wounds which ever and again reminded him of the battlefields

of his manhood, were all that his glorious past had brought to him. Few pilgrims ever came there to do him homage. The name of Platon Illyris was certainly venerated by republicans, by revolutionaries, by all students of history ; but it was scarcely more than a tradition to the actual generation ; it was far away, like the name of Tell or of Washington ; men have no time in these days to worship the gods of other years. Moreover, although they held his name in great reverence, Illyris held their opinions and actions in no respect whatever. He had little sympathy with the new order of revolutionary feeling. Socialism and Collectivism had little virility or value in his sight. His keen mind discerned the tyranny which they would evolve. His robust and independent theories had been as different from theirs as a lion at large on the plains of the east is unlike a lion caged in a den of a city. Therefore few of them had ever come twice to Aquilegia, or cared to sustain twice the caustic and fiery sarcasm which rent their false logic to ribbons, the martial and manly temper which despised their gospel of communism and assassination.

Old age is always disagreeable to early manhood, which despises it because it is old age ; but when it has a sunset glory behind it of a splendour of achievement which the mists of calumny or the night of death cannot darken, then, of necessity, it is extremely and unspeakably offensive to young men, especially to a generation which has achieved nothing.

Ednor indeed came there with the reverence of a disciple and the sympathy of a scholar, but Ednor was not often free to do what he chose. So,

gradually, an absolute solitude had been the lot of the hero of the War of Independence ; but it was not lamented by him ; he preferred the minds of great writers long dead to those of the doctrinaires and the nihilists of modern thought. He had become used to his loneliness, and valued it. Loneliness, if melancholy, is at least not irritating. The mind of a people is shallow. It soon forgets. For years the Helianthines cherished the name and adored the acts of their hero ; but all public evidence of their gratitude being unwelcome to those who ruled over them, and even being repressed with severity, they ceased to dare show what they felt, and as his own generation passed away his hold on the memory of the nation became slighter. To the generation which was that of Othyris the great patriot had become little more than a tradition ; and, like Othyris, it had ceased to remember that he was still a living man.

Scrupulous and stern in his estimate of the obligations of honour, Illyris preserved an absolute neutrality on all public matters. He never went outside the olive groves and cedar shadows of Aquilegia ; and the few who visited him in that solitude found him inexorable in his resolve to have nothing to do with revolutionary politics.

‘When a man is as old as I am, his name is but a pricked bladder ; even the peas have dropped out of it,’ he said to those who urged him to let them use his name. He knew that he had liberated his country once ; but that, through the treachery of another, and the un wisdom perchance of himself, neither he nor Helianthus were free—scarcely freer, except in semblance, than when the foreigner had ruled there.



The only companion of the old hero in his retreat in Aquilegia was the grand-daughter of one of his three dead sons. Many influences had combined to make her what she was, and the silence and stately gloom of her birthplace—the old northern city on the grey dull waters—had been to her what the darkness of a sunless chamber is to the gladiolus; it had bleached the rose-colour from the calyx. She had never known the joyousness of youth. Laughter had seldom parted her beautiful serious lips. She was not sad, but she was never gay. She was what Athene, made mortal, might have been. She had been born in a northern country, on a northern sea; a country of vast plains white with level frozen snow through long winters, and green with rich grass and covered by sleek herds and by fat flocks in spring and summer, with many-coloured barges drifting slowly along streams and through canals, and beautiful ancient cities with architecture fine and delicate as the lace-work for which their women were famous, and bell towers making music morn and eve over the gabled roofs and moss-grown walls. There she had spent a peaceful but lonesome childhood in a town full of mediæval legend, art, and history.

She had much of the beauty of a fine and classic statue: its harmony of line, its justness of proportion, its purity of colour. One could have fancied she was a Greek goddess imbued with life; there was something in her aloof from ordinary existence, from general humanity; something which was not arrogance, and was still less shyness; an immutable serenity which never varied, a disdain which was unconscious, even when it was unkind.

She had dwelt with poverty, but she had been nourished on great thoughts, and she had in her veins the blood of an ancient and heroic race.

Her mother had been a woman of that northern city on the cold grey sea ; the daughter of an artisan, a worker in brass and steel ; she had been married for her beauty and her piety by the son of Gelon Illyris, who, when exiled by the Gunderöde, had gained his living as a gunsmith in the dim old Gothic seaport town which was hers by birth. She had died in the early years of her wedded life, and her daughter had never known her ; she grew up, alone with her father, who was heartbroken by the loss of his wife in her youth. She had been educated by the nuns of a solemn mediæval refuge which stood on the edge of one of the dark and sluggish canals of the old streets. Here she had learned to make the beautiful lace which her mother had made before her, and here she had learned other feminine arts and crafts, and a power of reticence and silence not common to youth. From her father she had learned the Helianthine tongue, the Helianthine history, the Helianthine classics, and had conceived for them an impassioned reverence. By him, also, she had been taught to hold in awe and honour the great hero from whose blood they sprang.

‘Let us go to him, father ; let us go,’ she urged many a time. But the son of Gelon was a tired and sorrowful man ; his heart was in his wife’s grave ; he had never seen the great hero of his race, and Helianthus seemed to him far off, very far off, lying in the warm southern light, washed by the waves of the Mare Magnum.

‘You can go to him, child, when I die,

should he be living then,' he said to her, knowing that he had in him the pains of a mortal disease; and when he did die, which was in her sixteenth year, she went straightway from his grave to a southward-bound vessel loading in the docks. She did not know whether the hero of her race was living or dead; but Helianthus was surely there, in that odorous warmth, that amber light, that fragrance as of dew-wet roses, of which the Helianthine poets had written in so many different ages. She was drawn by it as the young fledged bird is drawn off the nest by the charm of the balmy air, the smile of the sunbeams dancing.

So one day Platon Illyris, standing in his doorway, leaning on his great olive-wood stick, saw a young girl, dusty and travel-stained, and clothed in black, come up his grass-grown path between the untrimmed rose-bushes.

She paused within a few yards of the threshold, and was silent, being afraid.

'Who are you?' he asked her, in no gentle tones, for he was intolerant of trespassers.

She put back the veil from her head.

'I am Ilia Illyris.'

'Who do you say?'

'I am Ilia Illyris.'

'The grandchild of Gelon?'

'Yes.'

A wave of emotion passed over his stern features as a shadow may flit for a moment over a marble bust.

'Why do you come hither?' he asked.

'I came to see the hero of Argileion and Samaris.'

A faint smile came on his cold, stern face. They were his greatest battles.

‘Is your father dead?’ he asked.

‘Yes.’

‘You have no one?’

‘No one.’

‘You cannot stay here.’

‘That must be as you will, sir.’

He was silent; the submission, immediate and unquestioning, softened him. He called to his woman-servant:

‘Maïa! Come hither.’

The servant answered his call—a strong, tall, bronzed figure, in the costume of the country, with the sad, patient eyes of a mare in the yoke of a plough.

‘I am here, master,’ she answered.

‘Take this child within,’ he said to her. ‘Cleanse her from the dust, and give her food. Let her rest. I will see her later.’

‘Come,’ said the woman Maïa, showing no surprise, asking no questions.

Ilia also said nothing, but stooped and kissed the earth; the earth of her fathers. Then she went indoors in silence with Maïa.

Maïa asked her no questions. Whatever the master did was well done, and beyond dispute. Thus the maiden from the north came to dwell at Aquilegia.

Here in this spot, beautiful by nature and sad from solitude, Ilia passed seven years of her youth, joylessly, as youth usually reckons joy, but not unhappily; in a profound calm, an unbroken peacefulness, but also in an unbroken monotony; and monotony, a couch of roses to age, is often a bed of

nettles to youth. She could not even be certain that she was welcome ; sometimes she thought that she was only tolerated, as the storks were upon the roof.

The years were marked by the coming and going of those storks, of the herons, of the swallows, of the nightingales, of the thrushes, of the quails. There was little else to mark time, except the succession of the wild flowers, from the January celandine to the December snapdragon. The distance was not much more than three miles downward through the olives to the seaward road, leading on the left to the beach and on the right to the south gate of Helios, called the Gate of Olives ; but the city might have been a hundred miles distant for aught that Illyris or Ilia had to do with it. Their one woman-servant went to its market when needful. Letters of friends there were none for either of them. Now and then Ilia finished some of the fine lace of which the art had been taught her in childhood by the nuns, sent it to a merchant of the north, and received its price. Twice a year she drew her slender income from the bank, went into the city, and bought for herself a black or a white gown. That was all. The rest of her time was passed in attending to household matters, and in study ; grave studies in the learned volumes, chiefly Greek and Latin, by which the house was filled ; for the library of Illyris had been saved by a friend when he had been first imprisoned and exiled : the friend was dead, but the books had been safely carried to Aquilegia when Illyris had first arrived there.

Platon Illyris never interfered with her. He oftentimes seemed not even to perceive her presence ;

and he was certainly unconscious of all he owed to her for the cleanliness and comfort which sweetened his latest years. At other times, but these were rare, he spoke to her of his far-away past ; and then his eyes would flash and darken, and his voice grow stronger, and the fires of his spirit awaken, and the days of the past live again for him.

Ilia had no knowledge of luxury and pleasure, and had no need of that to which she was a stranger. When she could see the sun rise and set above the sea, hear the nightingale's song in the myrtle thickets, breathe fresh, pure air, study the great thoughts of the mighty dead, and watch the succession of the wild flowers, she was content.

Illyris had possessed a profound knowledge of his fellow-men. No weakness or fault of theirs had ever escaped him. He had used them, and cast them aside as he did a notched sword. But of women he had never had any knowledge. He had the Oriental view of them—that they were made to amuse, and to conceive, and to nourish ; nothing else ; which is indeed the view taken by Nature herself. He did not therefore perceive that Ilia was of a finer mould, a firmer texture, than her sex in general. But she pleased his taste ; he liked to see that one of his own blood was living in the fulness of youth and of beauty ; her step was soft, her movements were noiseless, her voice was melodious and low, her face and form were those of the female divinities once worshipped in Helianthus, whose lineaments were still seen in many a mask and bust turned up in the soil of the woods of Mount Atys by charcoal-burners and mushroom-seekers.

The veins of Illyris had been chilled by deep

wrongs and long solitude, and affections were far away from him—as far away as the days of his great battles; yet he was glad to see Ilia beneath his roof, to know that she belonged to him. He was not unkind, but he was not kind; he thought little about her; sometimes he was interested in her studies of the ancient literature of Helianthus, and gave her the aid of his own great knowledge. But at other times he would tell her rudely that women should not occupy themselves with learning. She never contradicted him; she waited patiently until a gentler mood had come to him, and he was again disposed to assist her philological or historical studies.

But she was happier thus than she would have been in the noise and turmoil of any of the cities of men. Her temperament was that of the recluse; the stir and struggle, the sights and sounds of the world were distressing and odious to her; even the old, still, darksome cities of her mother's land were too populous for her; their chimes too noisy, and their roofs too close; their air too full of voices, and their hearths too near each other. She wanted vast solitudes, great silences, deep shade, wide waters; the vicinity of crowds hurt her like the touch of caustic; she had the soul in her of her people of an earlier time who had dwelt in lonely temples and served the altars of forest gods.

To Ilia, departure from Aquilegia would have been like the exile from Acadia to Evangeline, like the banishment to Danubian darkness to Ovid. She had nothing in her of the modern temper—nothing of its restlessness, its feverish discontent, its appetite for tumult and for change; she asked of life only repose, isolation, and the near presence of wild

nature ; she could live on the scantiest and plainest food, but she could not exist in an air breathed by drunken crowds. The solitude, the silence, the sanctity and majesty of these everlasting hills were dear to her ; the calmness, the stillness, the deep shadows, the clear lights, the sunsets beyond the distant sea, the silvery foliage overhanging the marble walls, the sense of nearness to a great past from which she herself had sprung, to a race which, æons earlier, had been her race, whose glories were imperishable in human memory so long as human lives endured,—all these rendered her home in the olive groves of these classic hills dear to her as no other spot on earth could ever be. Her love for it was the strongest love she ever yet had known.



## CHAPTER XIV

THE visit of Othyris to Aquilegia was soon repeated, and little by little Illyris almost ceased to remember that his disciple was a Gunderöde, the great-grandson of Theodoric. He only saw in him a young man of extreme intelligence, of high culture, and of original opinions ; one, also, who had as much humility as capacity. He forgot that this scholar might one day reign ; or if he did remember it, he only strove the more to strengthen in him all the views and principles which made Othyris averse to all that other men of his rank considered to be their religion and their right.

‘What would you have him do if ever he be called to the throne ?’ Ilia asked timidly one day after the departure of Othyris.

‘Refuse it,’ said Platon Illyris.

‘Would that remove his responsibility ?’ she said, apprehensive of appearing rash and rude. ‘If we drop a burden do we not still remain bound to account for it ?’

Illyris was silent a little while.

‘You think for yourself. That is well. I admit that it is well. You are bold. You are an Illyris,’ he said. ‘When there are two evils betwixt which a man must choose, he can but take the

lessor. He is not a god to change the face of the world.'

'But, as king, could he not do some good?'

Platon Illyris smiled grimly.

'The strongest swimmer in a stream stronger than himself is swept away on it. There is a putrid and pestiferous current always circling round every throne of which no occupant of it can escape the miasma. Carolus Magnus himself, were he reigning to-day, could not resist the sycophant, the politician, the financier, the pressure of the Press.'

'Might the Duke of Othyris not create a republic and lead it?'

'He might perhaps if occasion served; but that would be to turn traitor to his own race. A man of honour could not do that. *Noblesse oblige*; and it is an inexorable obligation with loyal characters. His is loyal. He is not strong, but he is sincere.'

'Then what future will he have?'

'Who can say? I doubt me he will end ill. Men do not love an honest man, whether prince or peasant. But get you to your household work, child. These questions are not for women.'

He regarded her as veterans two thousand years before in Helianthus had regarded their females. He looked after her as without protest she silently left his chamber. For the first time her beauty, her grace, her dignity were apparent to him; for the first time he perceived that she was no mere spinner at the distaff, or housewife in a dwelling-place. She was an Illyris; she was not as other women were.

Did she dream dreams of a future in which this young man and she might have a mutual part? Did

she see in herself a purer Eudocia, a more unselfish Irene, a Joan of Arc victorious and beloved ?

Who could tell the thoughts of a mind divided at once by virginal unconsciousness of its own instincts and by the force inherited from a martial race ? Memories of the springtime of human life, of the awakening of the soul and the senses, were far away from Illyris, so far, so very far, and covered with the fallen leaves of so many passionless and joyless years, yet they arose in his mind now.

‘I am no fit guardian of youth, of a maiden’s youth,’ he thought. ‘I am so old, so old ! An aged hound, toothless, and chained, and feared by none, although once he kept all at bay.’

And the heart of the hero of Argileion and Samaris was as a stone heavy in his breast.

Seeing that he was in sorrow Ajax came to him, and laid his head on the knees of his master and friend.

‘Ajax,’ said Illyris, as he laid his hand on the dog’s head, ‘ask not of the gods to live long, my friend. Age is but an unkindler death ; conscious of itself and powerless to rise. Readers of history weep for Germanicus, for Marcellus, for John of Austria, for Gaston de Foix—O fools ! Thrice happy were those youths !’

‘Elim of Gunderöde is a theorist, an idealist,’ he would say to Ilia. ‘It is not with theories, nor with ideals, that men are governed. It is by the sword, by the fist ; by the force of the brain, not by its fancies. His mind is rich in imagination, but it is poor in will-power. To act strongly he must be strongly excited ; when the excitement passes his will drops like a burnt-

out match. It is volition rather than intellect which makes the man who rules others succeed in being accepted and obeyed by them. This young prince does not believe in his own powers ; therefore men will never long believe in him. He is full of doubts and scruples ; how should he enforce his will upon others ? He has no will ! He is too undecided to govern men. Indecision is an intellectual defect ; it accompanies acute perception, it belongs to philosophic doubt, but it paralyses action. The student may be undecided, indeed should be, for he sees all the facts of a question, and is not called on to turn theory into fact ; but the leader of men must know what he wishes, what he intends, what he rules, and must never waver in his determination and his choice.'

'Tell me, sir, what ought I to do in the years to come, should I live to see them ?' Othyris had said to him one day.

'I am too old to counsel youth,' answered Illyris. 'The world of to-day is not mine ; it is yours. All that the men of my time held sacred seems foolishness to those of yours. I cannot judge for your generation. I am out of its orbit. Can the dark and dreary Saturn judge of the green and sunlit earth ?'

'In truth, sir, has humanity altered much since the days of Plato or Pericles ?'

'I know not. It has altered much since mine. I am old, very old ; I cannot judge for a young man. Your position is difficult, and may become more so ; but I should not dare to say what road you should take out of it, or even if you should attempt to get out of it.'

‘Would you counsel me?’ said Othyris; he looked at Ilia.

She answered :

‘No. I do not even know my own generation. How can I judge anything for any one else?’

‘But were you myself, what would you do?’

She hesitated. She knew what she would do ; she would surrender all things to be free. She looked at Illyris.

‘When you, sir, made your choice of life, did you doubt long ? Or did you see your path clearly and at once ?’

‘The stranger ruled in my land,’ replied Illyris. ‘It was easy in my day to see where duty pointed and honour and manhood led. There is no joy so great as a clear, straight road. This young lord’s road is neither. Do what he will, he will repent.’

Othyris smiled sorrowfully.

‘In doubt do nothing ; so a statesman said. That is probably how my life will drift away ; in doing nothing, changing nothing, desiring vaguely and uselessly, and aimlessly regretting.’

The still clear eyes of the nonagenarian looked at him with some compassion.

‘Enjoy your youth,’ he said. ‘Let men alone. They will not thank you if you suffer for them, nor are they worth it.’

‘I cannot enjoy,’ said Othyris with a certain passion in his voice, ‘and I have no youth, because I have never been free. I am like the planets ; I cannot escape from my atmosphere and its pressure.’

‘Young man,’ said Illyris, ‘we in my days were not theorists ; we acted. We followed our instincts ; we did not analyse them. True, it was the day of

great poets. But they were few, they must always be few ; the rest of us lived our odes, we did not write them.'

'You carved them on granite with your swords.'

'Eh ! Who reads what we wrote ? History, you will say. But will the future care for history ? The world cares but little now. A man's lifetime of study is pressed into a dozen volumes. The volumes stand on shelves and librarians dust them. That is all.'

'Sir, I want sympathy and you give me a stone.'

'To want sympathy is in itself a sign of weakness. Learn to stand alone,' said Illyris with some scorn ; he had been a very strong man, needing neither counsellor nor comfort.

Ilia made a murmur of dissent and of deprecation.

'We cannot give you bread, sir,' she said to Elim, 'because you must eat at other and higher tables than ours.'

'Let me take the humblest place at yours,' he murmured.

'No,' said Platon Illyris, and he struck his hands on the arms of his great chair. 'You are a good youth, I think, but you are who you are. No Gunderöde breaks bread with an Illyris, either in fact or in metaphor. Get you hence.'

'Go,' said Ilia gently but with firmness.

Elim rose, bowed low and went. He had been given the wholesome bread which he never tasted anywhere but here ; plain truth. It was bitter, yet welcome to a cloyed palate. Nowhere else in the whole crowded world would he have been thus dismissed ; nowhere else would homage, respect, and welcome have been refused him. He went out under the silvery shadows of the giant olives where the

cushats were cooing and the blackcaps were singing. Deep rest and fragrant silence lay like a benediction on the whole hillside. The only unrest there, was in his own soul.

Ilia and Illyris ate of the meal which Maša had prepared ; it was frugal but well-cooked ; the linen was homespun but lavender-scented, the table had in its centre an old pottery dish filled with flowers. Ilia would have been quite willing that Othyris should have broken bread with them there, for false shame, born of the false standards of the world, had never touched her. She would have given him the best she had willingly, but she would not have been troubled by any fear lest that best should seem meagre to him.

When their repast was ended Illyris went back to his book-room and seated himself again in his great black chair ; the window was open, early roses nodded between the iron grating, the pure mountain air blew through the room, birds sang in the myrtle bushes and in the fresh early leafage of the poplar trees.

Ilia brought him his Eastern water-pipe.

‘Sir,’ she said with hesitation, ‘why are you so stern to the King’s son ? He has a great reverence for you, and surely he is not guilty of the sins of his race ?’

‘Perhaps not,’ answered Illyris, ‘but he cannot wash their blood out of his veins,—nor that of the tyrant of the North. He is sincere, I believe,’ he added, ‘but he has nothing to do with us. He must go whither his birth calls him. Between him and us there can be no amity.’

‘Might he not one day realise your own dreams for Helianthus ?’

Illyris laughed bitterly, with the bitterness of one who jests at his own expense.

‘Child, my dreams were fair and fond, but they were illusions. I did not reckon with the meanness of men, with the sordidness of their ambitions, with the dwarfing and deadening of modern feeling, with the corruption which putrifies all public life. Fool that I was! — I dreamt of an ideal State, and I drenched my mother-earth with blood, for what? For what? That her sons might sink under a weight of arms, and her children sicken and die for want of bread! God forgive me my blindness! Fool, oh fool that I was!’

‘But you drove out the foreigner?’

‘Ay!—and the Gunderöde and their tax-officers and their drill-sergeants reign in his place! What good have I done to the people? I have not even given them liberty. If they forget that I ever lived, have I the right to blame them?’

His head sank on his breast, and a great sigh escaped him. He had driven out the stranger—yes, —but was Helianthus happier or freer? Was not her liberty a myth? Was she not fed on steel, and the scanty cones of the maize? Did not the children come to the birth only to toil as soon as they could crawl? The foreign sentinel was no more at the gates, but the foreign usurer was within them. What had been gained? His victories had been great; his country had been to him as a fair woman, bound a slave in a mart, and set free by his sword. But what was she now? Prostituted to the Jew, or famished in the alien’s factories, or starved and sunburnt in the mortgaged fields! His long life, his endless sacrifices, were as naught.



## CHAPTER XV

THE funeral of Domitian Corvus was passing through Helios ; a funeral provided at the cost of the State, imposing, long, stately, with troops keeping the streets, and crowds driven back by carabineers, women fainting, children crushed, barriers breaking, clubs crowded, flags at half-mast,—no accompaniment or attribute of dignity being wanting. It was really a pity that Corvus had not eyes to see it from his bier, for it would have rejoiced his arrogant and self-admiring soul, and have assured him that he had been really that ancient Roman whom in life he had delighted to be called.

The golden tassels of the pall were held by eight Ministers of the Crown of past and present administrations, several of whom had at times been his enemies ; and heartily as they had often cursed him, they had never done so with more intensity than they now cursed him under their breath, as they, all men past middle age, plodded under the burning sun, on the heated granite of the paven streets, up to the Cathedral of St. Athanasius, where Corvus, who had been an avowed freethinker all his life, was most appropriately to be interred with all the grandest ceremonial of the Church.

Corvus had been many things in his day, and his

day had been long, for he was eighty-nine years of age when he died. He had been a red-hot revolutionist, a conspirator against all powers and authorities, an exile without bread or tobacco, a refugee in foreign garrets and wine-houses, a hidden and hunted man in the cellars of Helios, until, on the death of King Theodoric, a general amnesty for political offenders having been proclaimed, Illyris alone excluded, he returned to his native country, found work as a lawyer, got himself elected deputy, took the oath of allegiance to the Gunderöde, and sat for many long sessions as an extreme Radical. He made himself feared both in the Chambers and outside them ; he had led a turbulent, violent, scandalous life, but he rose step by step, and began to loom large before the eyes of men ; he had no single scruple of any sort to drag him backward ; he possessed a domineering, overbearing, insolent temper, which struck like an iron mace upon the fears of his fellow-men ; he used this mace without mercy ; he was sunk to his throat in scandals of every sort, but he came out of them, as out of a mud bath, only the stronger. He was covered with filth from head to foot ; but he shook it off into the gutter, threw it in his enemies' eyes, and passed on victorious. From a revolutionary deputy he became a radical Minister, and, once a Minister, he slipped his skin as easily as snakes slip theirs in springtime, and became a reactionist of the first water ; and when disturbances occurred during his premiership he used the mitrailleuse and the musketry volley with as much firmness and ferocity as though he had been all his life an absolutist. He obtained all the highest decorations of Europe, hobnobbed with emperors, and was re-

garded by a large party as the saviour of Helianthus ; that he had plunged her into disastrous wars, seduced her with injurious ambitions, led her blindfold to the brink of bankruptcy, filled her prisons with her young men, and cultivated corruption upon her soil as a plant whose rank poison was the most fragrant of perfumes,—these things mattered not at all to his apostles and his adorers. He was the great Corvus, and when a strong wave of national indignation had at last swept him away into private life, his partisans had rabidly defended his name, and his southern retreat had become a place of pilgrimage for the faithful. And now he was being buried with all the honours of the State.

King John in council with his Ministers had decided that the State could do no less for the remains of this its most faithful servant. King John had always admired him, and had supported him, often to the injury of the Crown and country.

Domitian Corvus had been the only Minister of strength and will who had been ever wholly acceptable to the King. In this old man the King had recognised a craft so cunning, a force so pitiless, a brain so utterly unscrupulous, that he could not but admire them ; and found his master in the science of human nature. When the scandals due to financial speculation, corruption, and dishonesty became so discreditable to Corvus and his family, and so flagrant that they could no longer be concealed, and when even the very elastic moralities of the Helianthine nation would endure him no more in power, his fall had been sincerely mourned by his royal master. True, Corvus had been very old when he had at last been driven into private life ; but age had

never diminished his infinite resources, his relentless cruelty, or his consummate cunning. There was not his equal in the ranks of those politicians from whom the Crown had to select its public servants. Personally, the King did not attach any great blame to corruption. History was full of it. Even Scipio Africanus did not escape its reproach.

The strongest man is a weak one without money ; naturally a strong man uses his strength to get money where and how he can. The King was rather disposed to blame Corvus for not having taken more ; for not having enriched himself so that there could not have been room in his career for debts, and seizures, and similar blotches and blemishes, which are really only excusable in feeble men. It should surely be only simpletons who let their bills be protested, their womenkind be sued by tradespeople, their artistic collections sold at auction. When Corvus had excused himself for having neglected his own affairs because he had been so absorbed in the affairs of the nation, the excuse seemed to the monarch the only puerile speech he had ever heard from his great Minister.

The public in a measure held the same opinion as the King, and considered his errors of venality to be pardonable in Corvus, even as history regards those of Verulam.

Although Corvus had disappeared from public life under a quagmire of scandal, there had always been the possibility of his resurrection even at eighty odd years of age. At his death, therefore, all the other Ministers, both in and out of office, felt unspeakably relieved that the old rogue was nailed down in a triple coffin, and would be buried under a weight of

marble, never more to reappear. Meantime they all wore black, looked sad and inconsolable, and spoke with reverence of this dear colleague of their manhood, the honoured master of their youth. Therefore, of course, they had been obliged to be the first to consider a public funeral a fitting homage to the great departed.

‘The damned old brute,’ thought Kantakuzene, ‘he was the strongest of us all. He never had a qualm. He never had a scruple. He struck hard—and he never missed. He minded exposure no more than a model minds it in the studio. He cared no more when the nation cursed him than Richelieu cared when the people cursed the Robe Rouge. He was strong, amazingly strong.’

Kantakuzene, as he toiled under the weight of the coffin, sighed, for he himself was not very strong; he was only exceedingly subtle and shrewd, talented, eloquent, and adroit.

He had indeed that kind of strength which consists in knowing where one’s own weakness lies, and also he had no superior in the useful talent of making black look white, and a mere expediency appear a patriotic ability; but the merciless strength which had made Corvus hesitate at no enormity, no betrayal, no change of front, and no acceptance of iniquity—this he had not, and therefore he knew that he would never equal Corvus in the estimate of other men.

The clang of the brazen kettle-drum echoes farther, and its sound lasts longer, than the melody of the flute.

Othyris was moved to a hot indignation and an acute sense of shame for his nation and his family as he heard the fine bands of the King’s Foot Guards.

playing the Dead March from *Saul*, which came to his ear from the distance as he went up the steep road outside the Gate of Olives on his way to Aquilegia.

‘They shall know there that I have no share in the glorification of a scoundrel,’ he thought.

From the time of his early boyhood, when he had put his hands behind his back one day at the Soleia to avoid touching the hand of Corvus, who was then a Minister of the Crown, he had abhorred the conduct, public or private, of that politician.

The man had begun life a red-hot revolutionary, and had passed the last thirty years of his existence as an absolutist. He had abjured in age every principle which he had held in youth. He had in later years filled the prisons of Helianthus with young men who had merely held the same political creed as he had himself professed at the same age as theirs. He had played Judas to his country’s Christ. When war had served the purpose of his Cabinet he had sent tens of thousands of lads to the shambles for no gain, no reason, no purpose, except that it was in the interests of his own retention of office to do so. His old age—cruel, venal, crafty, shameless, strong—had gone down in dishonour and dishonesty ; yet he was being borne to his last home with pomp and with applause ! Too many men had feared him, too many had been compromised by him, too many now felt uneasily that their letters and their signatures were locked up in those boxes which would henceforth be the property either of his heirs or of the government, for any one of influence in Helianthus to oppose the deference paid to his remains.

The world thinks the woman’s prostitution of

beauty a greater sin than the man's prostitution of intellect, but it is not so. Of the two, the prostitution of the mind is more far-reaching, more profound, and more evil in its effects on others, than the sale of mere physical charms : the woman sells herself alone, the man often sells his generation, his country, and his disciples, with himself. History redresses the false balance,—so it is said. But how can we be sure of that which we shall not see ? For it is not contemporary history which dares to tell the truth.

From the path on the hillside leading to Aquilegia, Othyris saw in the distance the long line of the funeral procession passing along one of the great marble quays towards the Cathedral : afar off it looked as small as a regiment of ants. He paused a moment, and thought :

‘Illyris in obscurity and poverty ; Corvus in pomp and fame ! How little is the land worthy of her freedom ! She forgets the hero, and admires the knave ! How little are nations worthy of service and of sacrifice ! They feed the wolf off silver, and leave the watch-dogs famished on the stones.’

With a sadder heart he took his way upward to the lowly home of the victor of Argileion and Samaris, leaving the celebration of the triumph of Corvus behind him in the city which had forgotten Illyris.

Illyris had grown used to his occasional visits ; and if he did not welcome, did not reject them. Their discourse was usually on impersonal subjects, themes which were of equal interest to them both as scholars and philologists, students of history and of mankind : he who had made so large a portion of the past history of Helianthus, and he by whom the

future history of Helianthus might be made, met on the neutral ground of mutual love for the country, for its language, its traditions, its people.

‘He is a hybrid,’ said Illyris once in his absence ; ‘more Guthonic than aught else ; but, as far as his looks and his mind go, he might be a pure-bred Helianthine.’

Illyris could give no higher praise.

This day Illyris sat erect in his great chair of ebony and black leather ; his eyes were wide open and ablaze with light, a scornful wrath was on his features ; and his hands struck with rage a folio volume of which the yellow ribbed pages were opened on his knee.

‘Corvus!—buried by the State!’ he cried, his white beard trembling with his wrath and his disdain ; and he laughed long and loud, a terrible ironical laughter, scorching as caustic.

Othyris was silent : Illyris sat silent also for a while, his white beard drooping on his breast.

‘Corvus! — buried by the State,’ he muttered again.

‘What come you hither for?’ he cried, as he recognised Othyris. ‘Why are you not behind the bier of the man your father honoured?’

‘I came to show you, sir, that I have nothing to do with what I hold to be a national disgrace.’

‘Corvus was a Minister of your House. Are none of you princes behind his corpse?’

‘I know not. I can but answer for myself.’

‘You are a Gunderöde! Corvus was your servant.’

‘Not mine.’

‘Get you away from here. Go and join the



Ministers of the Crown. Go and pray for Corvus' soul.'

He laughed cruelly, terribly. All the eloquence which had once swayed the minds of the multitudes as a wind sways the sea waves had returned to him for a moment. Suddenly he paused.

'You are the King's son,' he said abruptly. 'Go, go, and tell your sire how Platon Illyris judges the knave he has delighted to honour.'

Then he beat his fist on the folio volume lying open on his knees, and a wave of ironical disdainful laughter passed over his features, illumining their apathy as lightning might play upon a corpse.

'Corvus buried by the State!' he repeated yet again, and a deep scornful laughter shook his white beard, his bowed colossal frame.

'I remember Corvus,' he said, 'as a youth. There were ten years between him and me. I had just raised my first regiment of volunteers on my own estates. He was with us in the early years. But he was useless as a soldier. His strength was in his tongue. Well, truly has it served him, that brazen, lying, boastful tongue—that skilful, crafty, flattering, and bullying tongue! It was his all, but he won the world with it.'

'Yes, sir,' said Othyrus, 'and the insignia of the great Orders of the world lie on his coffin. But history will not honour him; and it will honour you.'

'Who knows?' muttered Illyris. 'Is history the redresser of contemporary injustice, as we like to believe, or is it but the repeater of all the false judgments of that past which it often ignorantly chronicles and criticises? Who can tell? Clio is a great Muse,

but I fear she only sees through a smoked lens. It is hard to learn the exact truth of a little incident which occurs a mile from our door. It must be harder still to judge with any accuracy the deeds and the men of ages long gone by. Probably, if they write of me in time to come, they will say that I was a headstrong fool, and Corvus a great and a wise man.'

'They will say that, when they shall also say that Cæsar was a fool and Cræsus a hero.'

'You flatter me, young man. You give me honey to eat because I am in my second childhood.'

'No, sir, my reverence for you is sincere. I should not have crossed your threshold were it not so.'

'Well, well, I believe you,' said Illyris, with some emotion ; 'though that you should feel this, is strange in a prince of the House of Gunderöde.'

'Here I am not a prince ; I am a neophyte.'

'You have a pretty turn of speech. Almost too pretty. Honey—honey !'

'May not truth be sweet sometimes, sir ? Why should it always be bitter ?'

Illyris smiled faintly.

'Heed him not, child,' he muttered to Ilia. 'He has too deft a tongue.'

Then the old man's head drooped. He was silent ; his eyes closed ; the intermittent strength of his extreme age gave way to the dreamy stupor of failing powers fatigued by momentary excitement.

'It was so hot, so hot,' he muttered ; 'it was the twentieth day of June ; he was there ; he had volunteered, but he did not fight. He never fought on any field. If he says that he did, he lies. My right

line was breaking. We were hard pressed. I said to him, "Ride you to my son Gelon, and bid him come up with all his force, or the day may be lost." He rode away, but he did not ride to Gelon. He said afterwards that he mistook the road. Gelon did not come. It was like Grouchy at Waterloo. And the sun was so hot, so hot! Men dropped dead: unwounded, sunstricken. Our line wavered—almost broke. Then I cried to them: "Rally, my children; rally. Be firm, and the day is won"; and they gave a great cheer, half dead though they were, and they followed me, and the sun went down, down, down; and the wheat was drenched in blood; and my son Constantine lay in the ripe corn, face downward, shot through the brain. But the day was ours.'

Then again he was mute, and the light died out of his eyes, and the stupor of senility crept back over his features.

'He speaks of Argileion?' said Othyris, under his breath, to Ilia Illyris.

'No, of Samaris. It was at Samaris that Constantine, my grand-uncle, was killed. Argileion was fought in the autumn when the fields were bare; Samaris when the wheat was ripe.'

Othyris was silent. These great combats had in their ultimate issue placed his race upon the throne of Helianthus; and the hero who had gained these victories at such vast odds was left here, forgotten, unhonoured, unaided, allowed only on sufferance to end his last years on his native soil!

Othyris felt as though he stood knee-deep in that sea of blood which had dyed red the amber wheat of fifty summers gone.

'It is terrible!' he muttered.

‘Yes, it is terrible!’ said Ilia Illyris. ‘Terrible indeed that all that bloodshed, all that heroism, all those glorious hopes and dreams, should have had no other result, served no other ultimate end, than to crown an alien race on the Acropolis of Helios!’

Othyris grew red, then pale; stung by anger and by mortification. What other living creature would have dared to say such a thing as this in his presence?

But had he not said it to himself?

He looked at her, and saw that she was perfectly serene and indifferent to any effect which her words might have on him. Her head was slightly bent; her eyelids were drooping over the splendour of her eyes, as she looked down at the lace she was making; her hands continued their delicate evolutions.

Suddenly Illyris raised his head; his brain had cleared; the passing clouds had lifted.

‘Who followed?’ he asked.

Ilia arose and approached his chair.

‘Who followed what?’ she asked gently.

‘Who followed the coffin of Corvus? Not my veterans?’

She was silent; Othyris also.

‘Not my veterans?’

‘There are few living, very few, sir,’ she answered.

‘I know—Death has all my comrades: Death and Age. But those who still live?—they were not behind that traitor’s bier?’

She was silent.

‘Answer!’ said Illyris, striking his staff with violence upon the floor.

‘The few who still live were there, sir,—yes.’

‘They have lived too long, then—as I have done!’

*My men behind the bier of Corvus! Did the Apostles who were faithful follow the rotten corpse of Judas?'*

*'Perhaps, sir, they thought only of his early life. He was sincere once, was he not?'*

*'Once! Because Iscariot was once an innocent child at his mother's breast was he the less accursed? Maybe Corvus was sincere in his youth. I cannot answer for the hidden hearts of men. But, if it be so, that does but deepen the blackness of his sin. It is but a reason the more for every honest man to spit in scorn upon the earth of his grave. He took the oath of allegiance; he, a republican, a patriot, took the oath of allegiance to a monarchy; he sat in the parliaments of a monarchy; he crawled through crooked ways to popularity and power; he wore the badges and ribands of the sovereigns of Europe; he drove the youth of Helianthus to the African shambles that their blood might give him the purple dye of his own aggrandisement; he licked the dust before the path of kings; he cringed, he slobbered, he lied, he flattered, he struck Liberty in the throat, and he kissed the Gyges of the Guthones on both cheeks;—and you tell me he was sincere in his youth! You are fools! You are fools! Such a man is false whilst he is still an embryo in his mother's womb! A traitor is vile even whilst he is still but a germ in an ovary!'*

*Then, once more, the fire faded from his eyes, his voice dropped into silence, and he fell back heavily and with exhaustion, into the chair from which he had momentarily risen. His countenance lost all illumination, all expression. The flame of the tired spirit, fanned by wrath into an instant's light,*

flickered and died down. The intense emotions aroused in him by the remembrance of a traitor were succeeded by the dull gloom of age which recognises its own torpor and impotence, its own loneliness, its own inutility.

‘Go,’ said Ilia, in a low tone ; ‘go ; he likes to see you sometimes, but to-day you can only offend him and do him harm.’

Othyris hesitated, and stood an instant before the chair of Illyris.

‘Sir,’ he said, in a low tone, ‘I sent no condolence to the house of Corvus ; I sent no representative to his funeral, or laurel to lay upon his tomb. I consider that my father had no greater enemy than this man who called himself his most devoted servant, and who perhaps believed himself to be so. No one ever widened the breach between the throne and the people with more evil success than Corvus.’

Illyris made him no reply ; he did not seem to hear ; his thoughts were far away in the greatness of his past.

‘Why will he not believe in me ? Why should I be here except in sincerity and in respect ?’ said Othyris, turning to Ilia Illyris.

‘It is not you whom he mistrusts. It is your race,’ she replied.

‘Then he is unjust !’

‘He is old !’ she said, with a sigh.

## CHAPTER XVI

OTHYRIS followed Ilia across the small flagged entrance into the opposite room, which was a counterpart of the one occupied by Platon Illyris.

On a table stood the pillow and cushion on which she made her lace ; a brown jug, holding field flowers ; a small antique bronze which had been found buried deep in the soil when a great olive had been uprooted in a storm, a figure representing Narcissus ; some volumes of old books, companions to those in the other chamber ; nothing else.

To him it seemed wonderful to see a woman of her beauty and high intelligence cheerfully executing the humblest kind of work, and leading a life entirely monotonous and lonely. 'How Gertrude would admire her,' he thought ; but he knew that to bring her and his sister-in-law into contact was as impossible as to bring the stars of Cassiopeia into the constellation of Perseus. They were divided for ever by those barriers which are at once the most impassable and the most purely illusory ; those that mankind has constructed for its own bondage, the barriers of caste and of custom.

'May I see some of your lace ?' he asked with hesitation, fearful of offending her.

'Oh yes,'—she opened an old olive-wood cabinet

and took out a cobweb of fine threads with lilies and grasses worked on it ; the beautiful old pillow lace of other centuries admirably revived.

‘It is beautiful indeed !’ he exclaimed, and gazed on it with the appreciation and comprehension of a connoisseur. It was beautiful as the Ivory Tower had been ; beautiful as every work of art must be, into which enter the mind, the devotion, the self-sacrifice, the spirituality, of its creator. It was a little filmy thing, light as air, fragile as a dew-ball in the grass ; a rough touch could have destroyed it in a second of time ; but it had true art in it as surely as have the Taj Mahal, the Mona Lisa, the belfry of Giotto, the verse of Shelley, the Hermes of the Vatican.

‘I wish my sister-in-law, the Crown Princess, could see this,’ he added. ‘She is a great lover of lace. Might I take it to her ? She would know how to appreciate it.’

‘It is not for private sale, sir,’ she said curtly ; and she put back the lace into its cupboard.

‘I did not intend to offend you,’ he said with patience and humility. ‘I merely wished to give my sister-in-law a great pleasure ; for such work as yours is extremely rare.’

But he felt that his purpose had been divined, and its disguise rudely brushed aside. It was quite true that the Crown Princess was a collector and judge of hand-made laces ; but he knew that it would not have been for her sake that he would have desired to purchase that exquisite fairies’ web for some fabulous price.

‘Surely,’ he added—‘surely you do not create all this beauty only to put it away in a shut drawer ?’



‘Oh no,’ she said coldly, ‘it is all bespoken by a lace merchant of the north. Whenever I complete a piece it goes to him. I would ask you, sir,’ she added, a faint colour rising over her face, ‘never to speak of this to my great-grandfather ; he is not aware of it ; he would not understand. But it would certainly displease him that a descendant of his, an Illyris, should take money from a tradesman. He thinks that his own means are enough for everything, but they are not. It is necessary to add to them.’

‘I understand,’ said Othyrus. ‘At his great age men do not easily learn new lessons, and his pride was always great.’

‘Justly so.’

‘Justly ; yes, indeed.’

‘He might have ruled this country, had he chosen.’

Othyrus smiled slightly, but his face flushed.

‘I believe that he could,’ he answered. ‘History will acknowledge that he could, and that he did not do so from the noblest of all motives : the reluctance to cause and carry on civil war. But is it generous to say this to me ?’

‘There is neither generosity nor meanness in the statement of a fact. All that was done in that remote time has long passed into history.’

‘A history of which all the nobility is with your race ; all the ingratitude with mine.’

She was silent ; to deny the obvious, to excuse the heroic, was not in the character of this daughter of heroes.

Othyrus was wounded ; and he was angered with himself for being so. He loathed the whole period of that troubled time in which his great-grandsire had beaten out a crown of gold and iron in the

furnace of war; a crown which would never have been his, or his descendants', if Platon Illyris had so willed.

Whenever he passed the great sepulchre, called in Helios the House of the Immortals, with its peristyle of marble and porphyry and its dome of glittering gilded tiles, which covered the remains of Theodoric of Gunderöde and which from a cypress-crowned eminence dominated the city, he looked away from it and felt neither reverence nor gratitude to this memory so near to him which was already swelling into legend. All that Ilia had said had been true; but it was its truth which hurt him. If Platon Illyris had chosen, once upon a time, the Gunderöde had never reigned beside the Mare Magnum, nor been laid to rest in the Helianthine Pantheon.

The voice of Ilia roused him, clear as the sound of a silver bell, but cold as a flake of snow.

'Sir, you will pardon me if I leave you. I have my household duties.'

'If my sister-in-law, the Crown Princess, would receive you, would you allow me to take you to her?'

'No, I would not.'

The words were ungracious but the tone was gentle.

'She is a good woman.'

'I have always heard so.'

'Well, then—why?'

'You must know I would not pass the threshold of a Gunderöde.'

'It is you who are prejudiced.'

'Consistency is not prejudice.'

'You need a female friend.'

‘If I did, I should not seek one in a palace. But I do not.’

‘The Princess can be a very warm friend.’

‘She could not be so to me, nor I to her.’

‘Wherefore?’

‘You must know very well. I do not think that you should even speak of such a thing.’

He did know; he knew that it was impossible to bring together these two women who were so far asunder through every circumstance and feeling of their lives, every sentiment, habit, tradition, and belief. The prejudices of his relative might, he thought, have been vanquished, for he had gained her goodwill; but the more stubborn resistance of the daughter of Illyris would be unconquerable; she would have thought herself unworthy to bear the great name of her people if she had ever crossed the threshold of the residence of any member of the reigning family.

‘You may be sure of my absolute discretion as regards your beautiful *point d’aiguille*,’ answered Othyris. ‘But I wish you would transfer your favours from this northern trader to my sister-in-law.’

‘The Crown Princess can purchase it from the trader, sir.’

‘May I take her the address of the merchant?’

She hesitated a moment, then wrote a name and address on a slip of paper and gave it to him. He thanked her; then still lingered, loth to leave the subject or the place.

‘Is not such fine work as that very trying to the eyes?’ he said. ‘I have always heard that it is.’

‘I do not find it so; however, it is perhaps

because I only work about two hours in the early morning ; rarely afterwards.'

'But would it not be more agreeable to you to give your creations direct into the hands of appreciative persons than to let them go through those of mere tradesmen to any buyer?'

'No : the one would mean patronage ; the other is independence.'

He saw what she meant and respected her meaning.

'I only regret,' he said, 'that you will not do me the honour to treat me as a friend.'

'There can be no friendship between one of your House and one of mine,' she answered.

He did not urge the point, nor did he resent the equality on which she placed their families. It was refreshing to him to meet with any one by whom his rank was ignored ; it was like a draught of spring water to one satiated by a surfeit of sweet champagne. But he saw that his pleasure or displeasure were things quite indifferent to her.

When he passed out into the narrow, vaulted, stone passage, the door of the old man's study was closed. He did not endeavour to go in again, but went out into the open air where the sunlight fell through the grey traceries of the olive leaves, and the doves were cooing in the great gnarled branches above.

'You who have so much,' said the voice of his conscience to him, 'cannot you leave this wild dove alone on her olive branch?'

But his heart, rebellious, answered : 'What have I? Nothing ; since I have nothing that contents me.'

Ilia Illyris was the only woman on earth who could, in all sincerity and unconsciousness, have treated his rank as a thing indifferent to her. Her complete isolation from the world, and ignorance of its values and its habits; the disdain which she inherited for all the distinctions of position, and all the simulacrum of royalty and power, made her omission of all the deference which others showed him, and the simplicity and familiarity of her intercourse with him, entirely natural and indeed inevitable. It was as welcome to him as was to the weary wayfarer a draught of the clear spring water which flowed under the parsley and cresses of the rivulets of Mount Atys.

Who could surpass the Illyris in their traditions? Her pride was not in herself, but in those whose name she bore.

As the companionship of Ednor was agreeable to Othyris as the breeze and smell of the sea are agreeable after hours spent in a crowded ball-room, so the little house of Illyris was a refuge to him from the Court and from the world, as a shady moss-grown nook in a woodland is to the harried deer.

Ilia Illyris showed Othyris no disrespect, but she showed him no deference. Usually, wherever he appeared, women were in a flutter of expectation and displayed their charms as pedlars their wares. Her stillness, her calmness, the unvarying simplicity of her manner, and the occasional severity of her words, were a fascination to him strong in proportion to its novelty. She might have been a woman of the Homeric age. He had asked for her friendship at first sight; but when six months had passed he could not flatter himself that he had obtained it.

Had he deserved it? He could not, to be sincere with himself, think so. Weighed by her standards, his life seemed to him frivolous, unproductive, selfish. Besides, he saw that he was to her always the descendant of the man who had betrayed and imprisoned Platon Illyris.

To the temper of Ilia Illyris, treachery was the one unpardonable sin; tainting for centuries, generation after generation, unpardonable, unforgettable, eldest-born of hell,—of that hell which men have created for themselves. The crime of the Gunderöde seemed to her an offence against the nation still more than against her race. Racial feud is dark and strong and deathless in the national character of this country, still barbaric in so much, and classic in so much, and mingled with so many alien elements brought into it by its conquered, and by its conquerors; by those whom it had dragged at the chariot wheels of its triumphs, and by those who had overrun its soil and destroyed its civilisation.

But what wounded and stung Othyris was that he made no way with her as a man; as a prince he was quite willing to abdicate all rights of rank, he was satisfied to come there as any scholar might have gone to any teacher; but he was mortified to find that his own individuality, when it had laid aside all adventitious claims of place or privilege, should seem so little welcome to her. She was more cordial to Janos, the peasant who dwelt in a hut near them and did such rough work as the woman Maïa could not do indoors and out; a shaggy, bearded figure like a faun, clothed in goatskin in winter and in summer almost nude.

‘She has the name of Rhea Silvia,’ he thought.

‘She should bear a Romulus in her womb, who would be eponymous to an eternal city.’

Her entire unlikeness to all others of her sex fascinated Othyris; he could no more have spoken to her lightly than he could have struck the statue of Astarte in the face. Before her, he was subdued into submission, and took pleasure in the mysterious and novel timidity he felt; but away from her he felt a restless vexation at his own subjection and rage.

‘I am like some awkward, blushing Cymon, of the cattle-stall and the ploughshare!’ he thought with anger. She was a beautiful woman, but she might have been made, he thought, of ivory, or marble, or silver, like that wondrous statue of Astarte which had once been throned upon these hills, and of which the traditions remained in the pages of Helicarnassus. She seemed absolutely detached from modern life, wholly insensible to the influence of others, entirely callous also to the pain or the offence her words might cause. Yet he could not feel that such speech was rudeness in her, or was intended to wound; it was the direct and simple expression of her thoughts, and what she had said was true. Any denial of its truth would have died on his lips if he had tried to utter it.

Again and again Othyris had said to himself: ‘Is this the only result of that mighty and glorious epos—that *we* are here?’ What greater bathos could there be than this, that the resurrection of a nation, the ideals of its youth, the sacrifices of its women, the high and burning hopes of its patriots, should have had as their only result the paltry, fulsome, and useless ceremonials of a royal Court, the corruptions and con-

ventionalities of a modern government, the tyrannies of taxation and contravention, the endless waste of an insatiable exchequer, the slavery of military conscription, the comedy and the formulæ of parliaments?

The thunders had rolled along the mountains, the volcanic flames had leaped, the winds of the storms had swept through the air, the glorious sunrise had shone forth from the darkness, and the day had dawned—and for what issue? Oh *ridiculus mus*! Ilia and Illyris could not feel the paltriness of the issue in contrast to the splendour of the effort more acutely than he himself felt it.

‘It is not wholly our fault,’ he said with hesitation to Ilia one day. ‘Do not think that I say so because I am a son of the King. Our race is akin to Helianthus, not in harmony with its past or its present. But were we other than we are, I doubt if we could alter the national character or the corruption which has become the marrow of the bones of the people. Helianthus has been too long soaked in the poisonous vapours of tyranny, and bribery, and untruth and all their congeners, to wash in a Jordan of political morality and become clean. The disease has entered the innermost cells of the people’s flesh and of their brain; the greatest ruler, the holiest saint, could do nothing to cut it out; it will live on them as long as the nation lives. Can you ever obtain a plain answer to a direct question? Can any one buy the commonest thing without an effort being made to cheat in the matter of its price? Do you know anything of the conduct of elections, municipal, political, or ecclesiastical? Is it possible for a man or a woman to enter any career, or to advance in any, without underhand methods and dis-



honest craft? Can a mere teacher in a village school be given the place without pressure and influence indirect and often injurious to the public interests? You here in your woodland solitude know and see nothing of the sea of mud in which the Helianthine public life has its being. Were my father Solomon or Antoninus he could do little or nothing. Were we all demi-gods or angels we could not strive against the national debauchery of the national conscience.'

Ilia was silent; she could not contradict, she would not assent; but she realised that beyond the trees and rocks and torrents of her dwelling-place there were many things of which she had no knowledge. Even the great and virile intellect of her only relative was dimmed by the passage of many years and the effect of long isolation, so that perhaps it knew little of that modern life with which he had never any contact. Janos and his fellows were much what their forefathers had been two thousand years before, and even their religion, though it bore another name, was identical in superstition and in symbol with that of the days of Pan.

Ilia lived out of the world of men; she realised that she might be unable to judge it.

## CHAPTER XVII

THE Helianthine fleet was anchored in the bay, that beautiful and romantic Bay of Helios which has been renowned through a score of centuries for the many sea-fights which have dyed its blue waters red with carnage ever since the days when the temples of Poseidon, newly built with freshly-quarried marbles, had crowned the semicircle of its mountainous coast. King John kept his navy, as all sovereigns keep theirs, nowadays, as a visiting-card to be left on neighbours, near or far, and sent about the seas of the world to produce amity, or threaten enmity, as might happen to be necessary. It is an expensive visiting-card, but as the nation pays the price of it, a sovereign and a government need not concern themselves about its cost. It is also sometimes a cumbrous card, when it happens now and then that its errand is repented of when it has already had time to weigh anchors and get up steam. But as an innocuous way of making yourself disagreeable to some, or amiable to others, without binding yourself by treaties, it has no equal ; and if the cost of sending it about is vast, well—it is the taxpayer who suffers, and he is scarcely aware of what he pays, since it is all comprised in the Naval Estimates, with which the taxpayer does not often occupy himself, considering them the affair of experts.

The festive display of the Helianthine fleet closely resembled a hostile demonstration, as its ironclads lay on the dancing waters of a glad azure sea. The huge, ugly metal hulls were in line, one after another, as near shore as they could dare to approach ; and their gigantic guns bellowed defiance across the bay, as though the whole of mankind were their foes.

Othyris, as he looked at these great grey monsters, lying motionless on the water, their ugliness only accentuated by the festoons of coloured bunting hung from mast and funnel, seemed to see as in a vision the first naval war of the future in that lovely bay of Helios : the new steel and aluminium war-ships heeling over, exploding, sinking, going down in whirlpools of blood-stained water, churning the bodies of dead and dying men in the agitated foam, whilst some other victorious fleet rode triumphant on the waves of the Mare Magnum, firing in derisive exultation over the abyss in which his country's honour had perished !

But he alone was a prey to such melancholy forebodings ; every one else was rejoicing and proud, for at this moment the sea-monsters were on a peaceful errand bent. The fleet was nominally commanded by the young Duke of Esthonia, virtually by an old sea-dog admiral ; and the walls of the city, the beach, the bastions, the docks, the piers, the olive-clothed hills, were all crowded with an interested and admiring crowd, assembled to wish the squadron good-speed on its cruise. It was going this time to visit the adjacent country of Gallia, by way of proving the truth of the adage that the love of one neighbour often springs from the hatred of another ; for the diplomacy of Helianthus at that moment was to

ascertain her value to others without ticketing herself with any definite price, and to utilise the good-will of her allies in order to scare into dumbness and numbness those who were always ready to dismember her. For Helianthus to be friendly in a sweet and cordial way to Gallia, was to make the price of Helianthus go up to Gallia's foes.

The Finance Minister and the Chambers of the Empire of the Guthones had at the beginning of the session put a tax upon Helianthine honey, which was the best in the world, and upon the fleece of the Helianthine flocks, which were equally famous—both flocks and bees were nourished on the thyme-covered hills of which classic poets had sung; and the imposition of two such duties seemed but a poor return for the constant and costly state of prepared readiness for war in which the Helianthine people had been kept by their rulers to please the Emperor Julius. It was thought well to remind these Guthonic ingrates that neither Helianthus nor Gallia was a quantity that could with impunity be neglected in the calculations of the Julian diplomacy; that, after all, Gallia and Helianthus were kindred, so said philologists, if like other kith and kin they had often quarrelled and fought.

So the great ships lay like resting whales on the heaving swell of the Mare Magnum, ready to get under weigh; whilst Gallia, who did not mistake the motives for which she was to be visited, was busy embellishing one of her chief ports, painting her lamp-posts, cleaning her revolving lights, hanging up the colours of Helianthus with her own, burnishing her ordnance, holystoning her decks, getting ready reviews, illuminations and banquets, and

preparing to do the honours graciously, though keeping her weather-eye open. The naval pageant, the banquets, the presents, would cost her a vast deal of money ; but in republics as in monarchies, Chambers vote and Ministers spend happily and easily moneys which are not their own. The country of Gallia was a republic ; and a republic on the frontier of a monarchy is like a factory of dynamite established close to the house of a gentleman who is afraid of a popgun. It is true that this republic was almost indistinguishable from a monarchy, having a huge standing army, a very expensive fleet, a most corrupt plutocracy, a Press entirely owned by financiers, a number of worrying, fidgetting, and irritating by-laws, a most oppressive taxation, and everything else as like a monarchy as could be.

Still a republic it was ; and, although its chief magistrate was a respectable manufacturer of woollen stuffs, who did his best to look as like a king as he could by means of stars and crosses on his chest, outriders before his carriage, bloody battues in his parks, public appearances in opera-boxes and at race meetings, and absolute inaccessibility to any plebeian, still, a king he was not ; and therefore, to a king, he was an uncomfortable neighbour, and the republic over which he presided was a painfully unknown quantity—an  $x$  which disturbed all the calculations of hereditary potentates, whether constitutional or absolute, whether sprung up like mushrooms from the germs on battlefields, or embedded like fossils in the sandstone of ages. All the emperors and kings caressed the excellent wool-merchant, treated him as if he were one of themselves, and to their astonishment found him a very good shot. But

they were always exceedingly nervous about him, and thought him a terrible example to the wool-merchants of their own dominions. The Powers could have paired themselves off, whether for dance or duel, quite comfortably if Gallia and her wool-merchant had not existed ; but Gallia was always there, to give herself airs as the *terra incommoda*, or to offer herself in alliance, no one of them was ever sure where or to whom.

The sovereign of Helianthus, like all his brothers in the purple, was always convinced that Gallia was conspiring against himself. She was not, because she was chiefly governed by her trading and speculating classes, who loved money and hated conspiracies. But this King John did not believe was any security against her restless passions and her ambitious instincts, which even the great syndicates might any day be unable to control. Gallia was a blood-mare who might take her head and bolt at any moment, without warning, and carry her respectable wool-merchant to an Armageddon, as helpless as was ever John Gilpin.

Therefore, since such was the custom of his brother-potentates, he sent the finest vessels of his navy to pay a visit to the southern ports of Gallia, and his favourite son to hobnob amicably with the excellent wool-stapler, whilst Helianthine and Gallian blue-jackets would get drunk together in the streets in fraternal affection—affection which would not prevent their blowing each other into shreds the very next day if they should be so ordered to do by their respective rulers. For sailors, like soldiers, have no politics.

The great vessels were weighing anchor and

departing on their mission of fraternal love and enormous expenditure ; Othyris and Gavroche returned to the shore in a long-boat rowed by sailors.

‘What good do you suppose this will do?’ said Othyris to Tyras, who, like himself, had been compelled by the etiquette of his family to bid Esthonia adieu and *bon voyage* on the deck of the great flagship, the *Polyphemus*.

Gavroche, who had painfully dragged his lazy length up and down the companion-way, gave his little hollow laugh, which had the sound of a tuberculous cough joined to a Mephistophelian chuckle.

‘It will benefit our brother’s babies : the wool-stapler will send them cartloads of toys and bonbons. I do not see any other particular object in the expedition.’

‘It will cost as much as would feed the eastern provinces for three months.’

‘The eastern provinces do not enter into the *haute politique* of our father.’

‘Their lads are undersized,’ said Othyris bitterly. ‘They count little in the drill-serjeants’ eyes.’

The eastern provinces were the crippled children of Helianthus. They were in large districts mere sandy wastes, almost Oriental in their barrenness ; dry, searching winds swept them in spring, and their water-sources dried up by Pentecost ; whilst in winter, oftentimes, their streams overflowed vast districts, and their tilled lands were turned into stagnant lakes. Ruins of aqueducts and reservoirs showed what colossal, and doubtless efficient, works had existed to rectify the faults and abuses of nature in remote times, of which the very dates were forgotten. But,

now, there was no attempt made on the part of the State to aid a sickly and helpless peasantry in its contest with overwhelming forces, and the east was the spavined mare in the stable of John of Gunderöde. Its districts knew no royal smile, they received no Ministerial visits ; they were seldom spoken of in the Chambers, and never provided for in any Budget. The tax-collector remembered them : no one else, except the military authorities, who took away a certain percentage of their lean and tired youngsters, who were scarcely good enough for the cannon's maw.

As the long-boat bearing Othyris and Gavroche sped across the stretch of calm blue water, freshened by a light southerly breeze, the range of the Mount Atys peaks and crags faced them, with the noon-day sun illumining the snow which lingered on the summits. As the distance narrowed between them and the land, Othyris could distinguish the lines of the Helichrysum hills, and through his glass saw the olive woods of their lower slopes, and the whiteness of the broad, smooth, sandy beach below. He could even see the threads of the many water-courses ; the gleam of the marble strata ; the warm hues of the porphyry cliffs ; and discerned even a speck which he thought was the dwelling-house of Illyris.

How willingly would he have lived there himself ; the world forgetting, by the world forgot !

Happy were those who dwelt in such seclusion !

‘What do you see over there ?’ said Gavroche, raising his own glass in curiosity.

‘I see Mount Atys,’ said Othyris tranquilly. ‘Look !—that peak with the snow still on it and the clouds upon its side.’



Gavroche yawned, seeing nothing of interest.

‘The Municipality is selling the *Helichrysum* hills to an Acetylene Company,’ he said, with relish. ‘I can put you on the thing, if you like.’

‘Neither acetylene nor companies attract me.’

‘You are not of your time.’

‘No, I am not. Is it true that they dare to dream of touching these hills?’

‘Certainly. It is an admirable speculation. It will pay thirty per cent, perhaps forty. It is a Guthonic Syndicate.’

‘A Syndicate in this country is always Guthonic when it is not Candarian.’

‘Well, of course, those people have enterprise and money; we have neither.’

‘We have Mount Atys and its olive woods.’

‘Precisely; and so, as we cannot ourselves utilise what we have got, we sell or lease it to those who can.’

‘For three thousand years no one has felt any necessity to touch those hills; they belong to Isis and her son.’

‘Who are they?’ said Tyras. ‘It is going to be a big affair,’ he added. ‘Our dear father will get a lot of scrip. The Syndicate has not got fairly into saddle yet; but it will be a very big boom. The acetylene is only a beginning. There are no end of schemes—a funicular railway, a seaside suburb, a sanatorium, of course an observatory on the top, a lot of marble-quarrying and timber-felling: the thing is only in embryo at present, but His Majesty is very keen about it.’

‘Do you mean that the King favours any speculation so monstrous?’

‘Lord, yes! He approves and appreciates anything which puts money in his pocket.’

‘But it will ruin the view of the bay!’

‘Do you think the King ever looks at the view?’

‘But Mount Atys is sacred ground——’

‘To you and a few sentimentalists; I believe Homer was the first of them!’

‘They might as well sell Mount Sinai!’

‘They will, no doubt, if His Majesty ever is made King of Jerusalem. The Hotel of the Cross and the Pension Judas will be very fashionable’; and Gavroche laughed till he coughed.

Othyris turned away in disgust. Was it possible this scheme existed? He continued to gaze at the dazzling white of the lofty cone rising above the purple and grey mosses of the pine and olive woods, clothing the hills where Ilia Illyris dwelt, the hills of Isis and of Atys.

The boat cut a swift path through the azure water. The fleet they had left was getting under weigh in the sparkling sunshine of the early morning, going on its errand of spinning an amity as brittle as spun glass, and weaving an alliance as friable as sugar. The war-ships were steaming towards the open sea, and the boat was rowed towards the harbour beneath the walls of the Soleia Palace, being received by the people with cheers. The many-coloured masses of the crowds on shore began to move, and unwind themselves, and little by little disappear, like bunches of flowers untied and thrown away into the dust.

‘All those numbers packed together to see iron-clads weigh anchor!’ thought Othyris, ‘and not a

man amongst them, probably, to try and save Mount Atys.'

Without loss of time he instructed one of his most confidential servants to obtain all the information possible as to the projected purchase by the foreign Syndicate.

If the *Helichrysum* hills were sold by the City Corporation it was scarcely probable that the home of Illyris would be spared. Where the lumber-men make a clearing in a wood, the nests of the birds fall and the form of the hare is trodden underfoot. He knew that the owner of *Aquilegia* was a trader in the maritime quarter of Helios, dealing with the fruit brigs of the coast; a man who would be certain to part with the hillside property if a good offer were made to him. Othyris would before then have bought the little property, had he not feared the resentment of Illyris if he ever learned that he had become the tenant of a *Gunderöde*.

Aged and infirm as he was, Illyris would have found strength to leave any place embittered to him by an offered charity; and even had he means to buy the property, he might be driven out by expropriation. He had paid the rent ever since his return from exile, and had almost forgotten that he was not the owner of the place. It had never occurred to him to buy it, although Ilia, who desired to do so, put aside a certain proportion of the money made by her lace work, and saw the little pile of gold coins increase each year with pleasure. Every tree was dear to her, every little singing stream had its echo in her heart; she knew where the earliest violets bloomed, where the hyacinths, like those of Wordsworth, seemed the blue of heaven fallen on earth, where the nightin-

gales built their nests amongst the rotting leaves and drooping fritillaria, and where the striped toads made their summer homes under the ferns and took their winter sleep beneath the rocks. The love of those simple things is a passion with the soul which harbours it; a passion which has the purity of all impersonal emotion. To those who feel it, the heart seems to grow into the soil like the roots of some sensitive plant. To such as these no change is needed other than the changes given by the seasons, by the daybreak, and the sunset. Othyris knew that this was the passion of Ilia Illyris for the solitude of Aquilegia. Driven out from it, she would be lost and unhappy as a doe driven from its forest.

Willingly would Othyris have given Illyris any part of the beauty of Ænothrea or any other of his estates; with gladness would he have offered him any choice of his lands and houses. But he dared not; he knew that to do so would be both useless and offensive; the old lion would couch on no alien lair.

On the morrow his agent gave him full information as to the impending purchase. The sale by the Municipality was decided on, and only the assent of the King was necessary; but there was no doubt of this, nor of its ratification by Parliament. The money for the payment was guaranteed by the great financier, Max Vreiheiden. Nothing could look more promising, at least on paper.

‘If there be no other means of saving the hills, I will bid over their heads,’ Othyris said to himself.

So long as the contract with the Corporation was not signed, so long as the shares were not on the market, he thought it might be possible to prevent

the barter of this portion of the Helianthine coast to foreign speculators.

His agents and his advisers were not of his opinion ; the King, the Financier, and the Municipality offered to their eyes an invincible trio, to say nothing of the Ministers of the Treasury and of Public Works, who were greatly in favour of the project. Othyris listened to their arguments, but was not greatly impressed by them. It seemed to him that to save the glory of Mount Atys and its sea-washed slopes from defilement, was an act which would be both patriotic and æsthetic—a thing to be done, for the sake of the country and the city, even were there no private interests involved.

He had little knowledge of such speculations, of how to combat and to defeat them ; but experience had already shown him more than once that most questions resolve themselves into a matter of money, and that the longest purse is the strongest combatant.

It was necessary to act at once and as privately as possible, for if his father intervened with a formal veto in protection of the foreign speculators, it would be difficult for him as a prince of the blood to pass over such a declaration of the royal will. He selected the most competent of his financial administrators, and set them to work to study and contravene the projects of the foreign Company and the intentions of the men most prominent in the matter. He was well served at all times, for he was a generous and just master ; the secret was well kept and the counterplans were well laid. The amount required to oust the foreigners, and keep Vreiheiden neutral, was very large ; but not larger than he could afford, for the wealth he had inherited from Basil was very

great. Rumours that he was interfering to prevent the sale of that part of the coast were current, but they were vague ; the City of Helios was indifferent who bought, so long as a buyer there was.

The chief danger of serious opposition lay with the King.

## CHAPTER XVIII

SOME weeks later, as Othyris drew near the house of Platon Illyris in the warm afternoon, to his surprise and pleasure he saw Ilia come over the rough grass between the rose-bushes to meet him. She had never done so before. She seemed in haste, and her eyes looked wet with unfallen tears.

‘Oh, sir!’ she cried to him as she approached. ‘Will you not help us? Poor Janos is in great affliction. The guards have taken his son Philemon to prison for having sung the Hymn of Eos!’

The song was the national hymn of Helianthus; an ancient chant called by scholars the Hymn of Eos, and by the populace the Song of Sunrise. Its origin was lost in the mist of ages, but its memory was green in the hearts of the people. Under all foreign tyrannies it had been forbidden, but whenever freedom was regained its melody returned. It was to the sound of the Hymn of Eos that the War of Independence had been fought by the soldiers of Illyris, and the foreigner driven down into the sea and over the mountains. The grand old battle-song thrilled through the veins of the most sluggish and timid Helianthine. Theodoric owed respect to it, and respected it; his son tolerated it;

his grandson hated it, and persecuted it. He heard in it only the roar of revolution.

To the present King this national song was so odious, that if, on driving through one of the populous quarters, he heard the lilt of it from some unknown singer, working at leather, or deal, or cloth, or sewing-machine, within some unseen attic or cellar, his comfort for the day was gone, and the head of the secret police had a severe worrying. It was in deference to this antipathy on his part that the two Legislative Houses had, in the second year of his reign, passed a law decreeing the singing of the patriotic ode illegal ; a misdemeanour punishable by imprisonment varying from two days to a twelve-month.

Now, as it appears to be an axiom in political life that, although governments may change, the laws made by them must not do so, the fine melody of the Hymn of Eos remained a forbidden thing in the Code with fines proportionate in degree. The law had not succeeded in suppressing the chant ; but it had caused much widespread misery, as the offence was almost always only committed by young and poor men, students, operatives, labourers, peasants, and even school children, so that many through this law began their lives in the dock and the prison. Those who condemned the offenders told them that they had only their own wicked obstinacy to thank ; that it was perfectly easy to abstain from singing a song ; that to be forbidden to sing it involved no hardship ; that there were fifty thousand other songs on which no ban was laid. But this kind of argument has never availed yet to move human nature ; and it did not avail in Helianthus.



There was always some one chanting somewhere the forbidden hymn, in field, or vineyard, or sheep-fold, in garret, or work-yard, or cobbler's den ; always some one to be brought up for judgment.

Whenever a Liberal Ministry came into office it was supposed by the populace that this law would be repealed. But it never was so. The royal influence was too strong and the office-holders too timid ; and the Press continued to record arrests for the heinous and grave offence, just as when the reactionary party prevailed. He who makes the songs of a nation makes its history, it has been said ; but this song, having been often one of the makers of the history of a nation, was now considered but a gallows bird. The song, however, was in the hearts of the people, and rose often to their lips. No petitions were so often thrown into the carriage of Othryis, flung up to his balconies, or lifted to the level of his saddle, as those of parents, or sisters, or betrothed, of youngsters who had been condemned for this offence. None caused him greater pain. His position debarred him from showing his sympathy with those condemned, and power to abrogate their sentences he did not possess. When a pale and desperate woman tore her way through a throng and clung frantically to his stirrup leather to plead to him for her boy, who had been arrested for shouting the revolutionary chorus as he had walked with some comrades through the vines in the moonlight, or had sat drinking a lemonade at a tavern door with some lads come out like himself from the hell of a furnace or of an engine-room, he could do nothing for her ; for what use were words ? The boys had broken the law. The law was unjust, idiotic, senseless,

cruel ; but it had become the law. He, the son of the Defender of the Law, could not take their part.

‘Only for that!’ he said now to Ilia. ‘Where was he?’

‘On the shore down yonder, gathering seaweed. He was singing the song as he worked, thinking no harm. He is only seventeen.’

‘I am very sorry.’

‘That is of little use, sir. Release him. He is so young, and the offence is surely a very little one.’

‘Release him? I? Believe me, if I had any power, that song might be sung from end to end of the country.’

‘Some power you must have. With you as with the Popes it is only *non possumus* when you wish.’

‘I have none, in the sense which you suppose. I cannot interfere in any matter lying within the jurisdiction of the law.’

A look of incredulity and contempt passed over her face and wounded him, like spoken scorn from one esteemed.

‘Sir, you know as well as I do that, indirectly if not immediately, your family influences, however and wherever it chooses, the course of public justice.’

A flush rose to his face of anger and mortification.

‘That is a very grave accusation,’ he said. ‘I think you do not realise how grave it is.’

‘It is grave, no doubt. But if you care for truth you cannot deny it.’

‘It is not truth. It is an exaggeration, even if it be not a libel. We cannot, and do not, touch the

course of civil law. The power of the King himself stops at the doors of the public tribunals.'

'These are mere phrases,' she said with contemptuous indifference ; 'you would not use them to my great-grandfather.'

'He would not say to me what you say. Men keep within some measure of moderation in reproach and censure.'

'I think he would certainly say to you that if you look into your conscience you will see there that it is not unjust.'

'It is exaggerated ; and as regards myself it is entirely untrue.'

'That may be.'

Her tone had a doubt in it, an unspoken incredulity, which wounded him. He could not say on his honour that the privileges of the Crown were never strained. There passed through his mind many memories which told his conscience that she was not altogether wrong ; memories of acts with which he had nothing to do, which he had possessed no more power to prevent than to prevent the revolving of the moons of Saturn, but by which members of his family had turned aside the course of public equity as an engineer turns aside the course of a stream. The engineer sits unseen in his office, and has no weapon but his pen and his mathematical instruments ; but it is by him, through him, that the merry babbling of the water through the flags and cresses is arrested, and the birds on its banks left athirst.

He remembered Corvus, who had been saved again and again from certain exposure and probable condemnation in the tribunals, because he had been

in his sovereign's sight a heaven-born Minister, a kneeling lion holding up on mighty shoulders the throne and all its pomp and prestige. He remembered a colleague of Corvus, Noevius, who had died in office, heavy with years and honours and riches, though again and again the public voice and the public prints had proved against him the appropriation of funds, the sale of places and contracts, the most unblushing nepotism and venality in patronage, the selection for high emprises of favoured incapables.

He remembered the Baron Anthemis, an aide-de-camp of the Crown Prince, who had killed with a sabre-thrust a citizen who had jostled him on the pavement of a narrow street in Helios, and who had been found guiltless by the courts, both civil and military, and was still taking his ease on the boulevards of the city. He remembered the Countess Corianthus, who had been guilty of forgery to the amount of several millions of francs, but who was a Lady of the Bedchamber to Princess Gertrude, and was never brought to justice, but merely endured an agreeable exile, her husband being sent on a diplomatic mission to a great empire, where she shone as the most brilliant of ambassadresses. He remembered another great lady, the Duchess Daubrio, who, when her husband had been Minister of War, had stolen and sold to a foreign Power plans of mobilisation and fortification—a despicable betrayal for which she had never been troubled in any way. He remembered Colonel Vislauer, commanding a regiment of Foot Guards, who had caused three of his men, for a trifling offence against discipline, to be stripped and stretched face downward on the stones of the barrack-yard whilst

he kicked them in the ribs with his jack-boots. No action of any kind was ever taken against Colonel Vislauer for this brutal crime, because he was an officer highly esteemed by the King, and admired by the Emperor Julius.

Othyris was powerless to alter these abuses. There would be always 'lictors to clear the marketplace and put their necks beneath the curule chair,' as in the Claudian days. These remembrances, and others like them, thronged on his mind under the sting of her words.

Direct, avowed, conspicuous interference there was none; but indirect influence there was continually, acting like that atmospheric pressure which is at once invisible and irresistible.

She saw that he was humiliated and distressed, but she was not moved to pity.

'Why,' she said—'why, sir, should it be only the worthless and the exalted who are so protected? Why will you not help Philemon?'

'I have told you—I have no power,' said Othyris with anger and impatience of her unkindness. 'Your poor lad Philemon is not a dishonest Minister, or a military favourite, or a Court beauty, that he should be saved from an unpleasant punishment, nor am I one of those who can stop the law in its strides. Were it known that I felt any interest in the son of Janos it would do him far more harm than good.'

'Why?' she asked incredulous.

'Because I am a "suspect" myself,' said Othyris with irritation. 'Every action of mine is subject to suspicion. By my family I am considered a Philippe Egalité in embryo.'

‘Egalité lived and died basely.’

‘I do not think my life is base ; my death certainly shall not be.’

‘You cannot tell.’

‘Oh, pardon me ; so much at least any human being may be sure of ; he cannot know what death he will meet, but he can know in what temper he will meet it.’

‘Whilst you philosophise, Philemon, poor child, is in prison.’

‘You are very harsh to me.’

‘Why should I not be ? You have everything the world can give. You do not need any indulgence.’

‘Do you think material possessions can compensate for the unrest of the mind, for the captivity of the spirit ?’

‘I can understand that to some temperaments they do not compensate ; but your sorrows seem fictitious to me, beside the reality of the woes that I have seen.’

At that moment the peasant Janos rushed through the olive trees, and fell at the feet of Othyris ; he was a rude, wild, hairy figure, with great black eyes, now burning with pain and wet with tears ; his breast was bare ; his skin was bronzed brown, his beard long and unkempt.

‘My lord, my lord !’ he cried. ‘They say you are one of those who reign. Oh, hear, and be merciful, my lord ! They have taken my boy, my first-born son ; he was singing down on the shore, as he filled a creel with seaweed ; the song is forbidden, they say—I do not know. How can singing a song be a crime ? They have taken him into the city, into their prison. I have been there ;

they will not open to me, nor let him out. You who are great, and full of power, make them open. Give me back my boy !’

Othyris was profoundly affected.

‘Get up, good man,’ he said with gentleness. ‘I am grieved ; but, alas, I am as powerless as you are.’

‘Set him free ; set him free !’ cried Janos, who did not rise, but kept his brown toil-worn hands clasped round the knees of the man whom he believed was omnipotent. ‘He was sixteen last day of all the Saints. Only sixteen, my lord ! a little lad who should be at play, and he works like an ox at the mill, to aid me, and get bread for his brothers. Only singing a song !—God in Heaven ! the same old song that was sung by the men who followed the Great Man when he drove the strangers into the sea.’

His hands relaxed their hold, he rolled upon the turf in the hysterical anguish of the southern peasant, tearing madly at his matted auburn hair, shrieking like a butchered ram whose throat is gashed by the knife.

‘You might have spared me this,’ said Othyris to Ilia Illyris. ‘Believe me, I need no pressure.’

‘I did not know that he was near.’

She bent over the writhing body of the peasant.

‘Janos, arise,’ she said as she touched his shoulder. ‘You can hear me ? You hurt yourself and me, my friend. The Duke of Othyris is sorry for you and for the boy.’

Janos was calmed by her touch and her voice, as an infuriated animal is touched by those of one whom he loves and is accustomed to obey. He did not rise from the ground, but he ceased to rave, and

writhe, and tear his hair and beard ; he lay face downward on the grass, trembling and sobbing bitterly. Othyris stood near him, moved to a great and painful pity.

To those who are accustomed, by breeding and through pride, to restrain in themselves the outward expression of all emotion, a violent and ungoverned display of strong feeling always appears to the heartless indecent, to the merciful most piteous. Unveiled emotion always appears an offence to those accustomed to the restraints of a polished society.

‘I feel wholly with you, Janos,’ he said. ‘Rise, my poor man, and take courage. If there be any way in which I can help you I will take it. Are you sure your son went quietly with the town guards? If he struggled——’

‘No doubt he struggled. No doubt he rebelled. He is a youth with a man’s heart,’ said Ilia Illyris with some disdain. ‘Do not even the timid fawn and sheep rebel, when they are being dragged to the shambles?’

Janos staggered up to his feet.

‘Did he rebel? I know not, my lord. No one was there. As they passed through the city gate he saw Damon, the son of Orestes, who is a comrade of his, and he cried aloud to him of what had chanced. “Tell father,” he cried——“tell father they take me to prison for singing the Song of Sunrise,” and Damon, the son of Orestes, came up hither to me, fast as a dog may run, and he said : “They are taking him down to the city prison. Philemon will not sleep at home to-night, nor many nights to come.” And that is all that Damon, the son of Orestes, knew, and all that I know.’



Then he threw up his arms to heaven, and wailed aloud ; a dark, wild, most sorrowful, most terrible figure, standing in the clear green sunlight beneath the trees.

‘I will do what I can,’ said Othyris.

‘Go, Janos,’ said Ilia. ‘You hear what hope is given you. I will come and speak with your wife before the sun is down.’

‘Will he be back this night?’ said Janos, the great sobs breaking his words.

‘There is no hope of that, my poor friend,’ said Othyris. ‘The law is quick to take, and very slow to loose.’

‘When—when—’ gasped Janos—‘when, oh my lord?’

‘I cannot tell ; I can promise nothing. I possess no power. But what I can I will do. Go now. You will hear from me.’

The accent of authority, which was natural to Othyris when wearied or opposed, asserted itself through the kindness and compassion of his tone. It cowed and silenced the peasant ; he ceased to importune, he tried to restrain his grief ; he ceased to wail and scream ; with despair upon his face he slunk away between the great trunks of the olives ; he did not dare even to pray any more.

‘He is a poor, rude creature, sir,’ said Ilia. ‘He is not a courtier !’

‘He is distraught,’ said Othyris ; ‘and you, lady, are unkind.’

The colour rose into her cheeks.

‘I was wrong,’ she said ; ‘I should have thanked you. You were good to him.’

Othyris bowed to her, and took his leave in silence.

He was wounded by what seemed to him her injustice and unkindness.

Ilia remained out of doors by that old well where she had spoken with him ; she sat down upon its marble ledge, which was broad and solid as a bench and carved with the acanthus leaf so dear to classic stone-workers. She was vaguely startled by the influence which she dimly perceived that she possessed over Othyris. Some slight comprehension of the intense restraint which he must put upon himself to submit to her disregard of all the formalities and deference to which he was by habit accustomed, and by his birth entitled, dawned on her ; and for the first time she asked herself why he did so. Was it not, she thought, because he was sincerely weary of the conventionalities and hypocrisies of etiquette ?

This explanation seemed to her simple and natural ; and she could not, from her ignorance of the world, measure in any degree the vast power which she must exercise over him to make him subdued to such renunciation of his claims to respect, such submission to her continual ironies and censure, her complete indifference to his rank. But for the first time, that morning, some perception of all which she ignored, and which he renounced, dawned on her ; and the dignity and forbearance of his attitude under the provocation which she perpetually gave, claimed her admiration and moved her to a certain penitence. Birth, and the whimsical caprices of men, gave him the authority and the rank he held ; it was the fault of the world, not of himself.

She sat under the olives, whilst the swallows flew to and from their nests under the eaves of her house,

and a greater sympathy stirred in her towards the son of the King than she had ever felt before. He was to her only Elim of Gunderöde, but to all the world he was one of the Princes of Helianthus, before whose coming crowds acclaimed, and trumpets sounded, and sentinels saluted, and in whom all the servility of the human race recognised *un grand de la terre*.

‘Ilia!’ called the voice of Platon Illyris from the study window.

She rose and went.

‘So they have taken the son of Janos to their prison because he sang the Song of Eos!’ said Illyris as she entered. ‘Heavens and Earth! But for that hymn what were the country to-day? A geographical expression! A loose shaft of arrows that any hand could break! Ah, child, if you had heard the people sing that song in the days of my youth! It roused them as one man from the mountains to the sea. We who were scholars called it the Hymn of Eos; but the people called it the Song of Sunrise. It is so old, so old, that mighty hymn. Men say it was written by Pindar. That is mere conjecture. But what is sure is that its strophes were sung when the armies of the Medes and Persians were driven out of Helianthus, and the tyranny of the Asiatics ended then and for ever.’

The Song of Eos!

Across the long dark space of joyless years Illyris saw the rosy morns and golden eves of his early manhood, when he, and the brothers and friends of his heart, had gone through the seeding grass of summer, or along the edge of the blue sea, chanting its chorus in triumphant defiance.

### The Song of Eos !

How often had the grandeur of its strophe and ante-strophe rolled like thunder above the ranks of his young soldiers, urging them on to combat and to victory as though the Divine Twins rode on their milk-white steeds and called to them aloud, as in the great strife of yore.

And now the classic battle-chant was a forbidden thing, an offence, a misdemeanour, a breach of common law !

Platon Illyris struck his tremulous hand upon the wooden arm of his chair. God of Battles ! For what had they fought, he and his ? For what had they died, all the brave and beautiful youths of the years of the liberation ?

O cruel cynic that men call Fate ! O grinning satirist that men call Time !

‘If I had known, if I had foreseen this rule of the *Gunderöde*,’ he muttered, ‘I would have left the stranger in the land, I would have left the foreigner in her palaces, and the alien flag on her towers ; and I would have bought a sailing vessel and sailed far away from her shores, and left to their choice a bloodless and spineless people, who, having achieved freedom, knew not how to hold it in their nerveless hands !’

The land had been to him as a fair woman enslaved and fettered. He had given all his life to her service, and had set her free, and had put in her hands the golden fruit and flowers of liberty ; and she, she had thrown down the fruit in the dust, and had stretched out her wrists to the fetters ! Wise in their generation had been the men who had never fought, the men who had never dreamed, the men who never

pitied, or strove, or desired ; but sat in their dens like the spiders, and spun their webs, and devoured their prey, and waxed fat, leaving others to toil and to suffer, and the great salt sea of human tears to roll on from pole to pole !

## CHAPTER XIX

ON leaving Aquilegia, Othyris took his way to the annex of the Soleia Palace, used as a *pied-à-terre* by Tyras, who happened at this time to be spending a few days in Helios. It was never for very long that Gavroche honoured Helios or Helianthus ; he was generally to be found in the pleasure places of other countries, where he felt freer, and was not worried by any obligations to conduct himself occasionally with decency. Othyris found him in his bath-room, having been groomed by his valet and wrapped in robes of silken stuffs, and left, by his command, to sleep an hour or two before being dressed for the evening. Without, it was still a light and lovely evening, with the rays of the sun still rising like an array of spears above the horizon of the sea.

But in the rooms of Tyras all was shuttered and perfumed and hot. Tyras had never looked at a sunset in his life. He was lying on his back on a soft couch ; he was always tired ; he was a Hercules in his build, but he was an utter wreck in his constitution. At seven-and-twenty he was a ruin, wholly in body and partly in mind.

Othyris looked at him with his usual contempt ;

and the prostrate figure stretched itself with lazy ennui.

He was not pleased to see his brother enter ; but he had never dared to keep out Othyris, for whom he had the sullen respect and the unwilling submission of the debtor to the creditor.

‘What the devil can you want at this hour?’ he muttered, with the straw of a strong drink between his teeth.

‘I do not come for pleasure, you may be sure,’ said Othyris.

‘Have any of them been to you?’ said Gavroche, meaning his creditors.

‘No. You are not drunk, I think,’ said Elim, ‘at least not so drunk as not to be able to understand. Sit up, and hear me.’

‘I will hear you,’ said Tyras, ‘but damn me if I will sit up. What is it you come to say?’

‘Listen, and comprehend. You will see the Minister of Justice, Deliornis, at the Palace to-night. You must take him aside, and tell him that the youth whose name is written on this paper has been arrested and imprisoned for singing a forbidden song ; that he must let out this lad by such means and on such counts as he may judge fittest ; but that the boy is innocent and must be restored to his parents, who are poor peasants dwelling on Mount Atys, without being marked or injured for life by a penal sentence or by a longer imprisonment, or by any punishment of any kind. You hear?’

‘You want chestnuts taken out of the fire. Why do you not speak to Rags yourself?’

‘I never speak to the man whom you call Rags ; and any interference of mine would only damage

this lad ; they would be sure he was an anarchist and an atheist if I tried to save him. You are orthodox and royalist ! Certainly your protection will be injurious to him in another way, but he is a peasant, not a citizen, and so that kind of indecent calumny will not hurt him much, as he will always remain in ignorance of it.'

'Deliornis is very rough on all the revolutionary scum ; he will be a mule to move.'

'My dear Gavroche ! When a monarchical mule is touched by a prince's whip he moves at once, obediently ; indeed he can never trot fast enough ! Besides the Minister can take his information, and satisfy his conservative conscience. This is what you have got to do ; and you are not to name me in the matter.'

Tyras raised his head from the cushions, and looked at his brother with glassy, insolent, mocking eyes in which there danced a hundred little devils of vile suspicions and lubricities which he did not dare embody in words.

'There is the boy's name,' said Othyris, as he put a slip of paper on a marble table beside the bath. 'Take it with you to the Palace, or you will forget the name. The boy was arrested on the seashore beneath Mount Atys yesterday, Thursday, in the forenoon. Put out of your head all impudent and unclean suppositions. There is no place for them in this case. The youth is a harmless and ignorant little peasant. What he sang was the Song of Eos. That song may be very abhorrent to Deliornis, but it is written in the hearts of the whole populace of this country.'

'And your motive ; what is it ?'



‘It is not one which you could understand. Abstract justice would be as unintelligible to you as is voluntary sobriety.’

Gavroche laughed a little, lazily. He always appreciated his brother’s epigrammatic phrases.

‘What will you give me?’ he asked. ‘Every affair comes to that.’

‘When one negotiates with those who are purchasable, yes. I am quite prepared to pay you and to pay your politician. Every favour obtained from an incorruptible Minister must be paid twice over : to the intermediary, and to the incorruptible.’

Tyras laughed again, relishing the reply.

‘You amuse me! What will Deliornis want beyond the honour of conversing confidentially with me in the sight of society? Nothing, I should think. It will give him such immense pleasure. I am a slightly damaged peach, perhaps, but I am a prize peach, and I am still in the basket.’

‘What will you want?’ said Othyris. ‘Say at once. I must leave you in five minutes.’

‘Give me Coscyra.’

‘I admire your modesty.’

Coscyra was one of the finest estates in the possession of Othyris.

‘Give me Coscyra,’ repeated Gavroche.

‘No. No one of my estates ever goes out of my ownership.’

‘You think the people on them a *charge d’âmes*!’

‘Never mind what I think. They do not change hands. What I will do if you get this poor lad’s freedom is to have all the paper you have given to Reuben Muntze bought up by my agents and

destroyed. Muntze is the most dangerous of all your Jews.'

'But that will not give me any money!'

'No, but it will save you a good deal. Have you ever calculated the interest you pay all these men?'

'No; it runs on——'

'Precisely. It does run on; and the longer it runs on the worse for you. Bankrupt princes, my dear Gavroche, have been seen in this world.'

'Yes; but they are always sure of a good dinner with American *nouveaux riches*!' said Gavroche with a chuckle. 'If Uncle Basil had left me what he left you——'

'A score of Basils would not have saved you from yourself.'

Gavroche, who was no fool, knew that this was true; and for once he was silenced.

'Well,' said Othyris, 'do you accept?'

'You will set me free of Muntze altogether?'

'I will set you free of all your existing obligations to him. I dare say you will try to make others tomorrow. But I shall hope to prevent that.'

Tyras hesitated; he would have preferred money down; but Muntze was the most intrusive, the most ill-bred, the most odious of all his creditors. He had got the money-lender made a baron, and decorated; but Muntze was always importuning and never satisfied; he was always wanting unattainable things: election to patrician clubs inexorably shut in his face; entrance to houses where the hall-porters would have closed the doors against him; presentations to men who would sooner have sat down to dinner with a sweep; invitations to race-

meetings, to yachting-matches, to the drawing-rooms of great ladies, to the dressing-rooms of great actresses. For Muntze was ambitious of social success, and did not quite correctly estimate social requirements ; was loud in his dress, profuse in his jewellery, self-assertive in his manners, and had not the humility and amiability which alone can excuse the pretensions of the *novus homo* to be received in high places ; he did not even know how to lose at cards to his social superiors with tact. There was no doubt, thought Tyras, he was the most painful kind of creditor under the sun.

‘I accept,’ he said sullenly. ‘Will you put it in writing?’

‘No, I will not,’ replied Othyris. ‘When the young man is given back to his parents, I will do what I have said. You know me.’

‘*Au revoir, donc ; ce soir chez Papa,*’ said Tyras, perceiving that he could make no better terms.

His brother knew that he would do his best to get the release of Philemon from Delioris, for Gavroche, when he had his own interests to serve, and his brain was clear of alcohol, was an exceedingly intelligent and acute negotiator.

Left alone, he now finished his iced drink agreeably to himself, and turned the matter with which he was entrusted over in his mind. Gavroche when he liked could be an *enjôleur* ; he had when he chose a fascination in his drowsy regard, and in the slight, mocking smile of his thin lips, which bewildered many, attracted many, and dominated not a few, though some, and those timid women and honest men, shrank from it.

The generosity of Othyris did not cause him any

surprise because he was used to such liberality ; but he thought that his brother must set great store on this youth for some reason unrevealed. There were hundreds of men and boys arrested every year for singing that song. Why did one out of the many interest Elim so greatly ? That, however, he reflected, would not be difficult to discover, for here was the boy's name, Philemon, son of Janos Odiskia, who was a labourer in the olive woods of Aquilegia, a district of the Helichrysum hills. Though Tyras habitually drenched his brains with brandy, he was shrewd, and did not make the mistake of judging others by himself. He did not suspect that anything disreputable was the cause of his brother's action, but he reasoned that the motive must be strong, exceedingly strong.

'I will get over Deliornis, and then I will find it all out,' he said to himself. He liked finding out what was concealed, and was clever at it, when his indolence, and his caprice, and his inconstancy, did not make him weary of a chase before he had got fairly on the scent in it. The same thing never attracted or occupied him for long ; not even his own interests.

'You would have had more power than any of us if you had not burned up your brains with brandy and impaired your volition with morphine,' Othyris had said to him one day.

'The river would be dry land if it were not water,' said Tyras. 'Have you nothing more novel to say than that ? A *patron* once told me in Paris that all his workmen died before thirty-five of drink of some sort. Why should I be more virtuous than a man in a blouse ?'

‘There are a great many reasons with which I will not trouble you, because they would not weigh with you.’

‘And there are a great many reasons with which they would trouble me, if I were not irreclaimable. The King sent me a tour in the northern provinces when you were in Asia—oh-hé! I promise you he won’t send me on another.’

He laughed his short, weak sardonic laugh of which diseased lungs were the feeble bellows, but which had a faint, far-off echo of childish mirth in it which made his brother’s heart ache, recalling other days.

Gavroche had not been mistaken when he had counted securely on the complacency and compliance of the Minister in such a small matter as the arrest of a poor peasant. Deliornis would have opened wide the door of the fullest penitentiary in Helianthus to enjoy that delightful quarter of an hour in which the Prince of Tyras sat beside him in a recess, putting his hand familiarly on his shoulder and saying, ‘*Voyez donc, mon cher.*’ To be called ‘*mon cher*’ by a prince of the blood, Deliornis would cheerfully have passed a decree declaring that all prisons of every kind should be abolished! Kantakuzene stiffened his back sometimes; Deliornis never. The former had the irritating qualities of a man who has studied back history and his contemporaries; the latter had that delightful inferiority which comes from the total absence of early education. Kantakuzene occasionally was overborne by his own intellect into showing that he did not greatly estimate that of royal personages; Deliornis never showed this, because he never felt it, —never felt anything in the presence of his monarch

except the humility and the timidity which the tradesman feels before a patrician customer.

Deliornis attributed the worst motives possible to his prince's interest in the young peasant, but that did not prevent him from obeying the wishes of Tyras. He would have trodden on all laws and all justice if any one of the royal family had desired it; and he consented as readily to set the lad free without examination of the charge made against him, as he would have consented to put him in prison without any charge at all if invited to do so by the same personage.

Of necessity, he said that the law must take its course; that his personal interference with a question of the police was utterly out of the question; that no personal pressure could ever be exercised, etc. etc.; and with equal discretion Gavroche assured him that he would never dream of his going out of the proper course of ministerial etiquette to oblige himself; that all he asked was clemency for the offence, if offence there were. But each of them knew very well, when their conversation ended, that Philemon, son of Janos, would be outside the gates of the gaol on the morrow, simply because the Prince of Tyras wished it. '*Au bon entendeur salut!*'

That evening the fastidious people, who could not see in a rag-merchant a heaven-born statesman, observed with disapproval and curiosity that the Prince of Tyras, who was quite sober, looked like a gentleman, and wore that air of amiable condescension which he could put on when he liked, conversed long and seriously with Deliornis in a flower-filled alcove of one of the least frequented of the Palace drawing-rooms. No one could hear what passed, but the long

conversation gave rise to many comments and conjectures on the part of the guests of the Court.

On the morrow Othyris received a note signed 'Gavroche':

*'It was all a mistake of the Carabineers. The usual fault: too much zeal in the public service. So touching! The youth, not later than to-morrow, will be restored to the bosom of his family, with compensation. Now rid me of Reuben.'*

Greatly to the chagrin of Baron Muntze all the signatures of the Prince of Tyras were withdrawn from his hold, the amounts for which they had been given being paid to him with full interest. A caution was at the same time conveyed to him that if he lent again to the Prince of Tyras he would be likely to get into trouble in high places.

'Damn me, I ought not to spy on Elim after that!' thought Gavroche, in an emotion of genuine gratitude to his brother; and the mystery of his brother's interest in the youth who had been arrested was left unpenetrated by him for the moment, through one of those intermittent impulses of honour which now and then illumined the sodden darkness of his soul.

## CHAPTER XX

ON the following day, towards sunset, the boy Philemon stood again on the mud floor of the little home so dear to him; he was embraced, kissed, wept over, received as one risen from the dead.

What had happened to him? He knew no more than a young dog why he had been seized and chained up, then unchained and let loose.

‘They took me,’ he said to his parents, when their clamours and caresses grew a little quieter. ‘They came down on the beach and said I was singing the song; yes, I was singing the song as I raked up the weed. They used me roughly and swore at me. They tied my arms behind me. They took me down to a guard-house by the Gate of Olives; and, when it was dark, to that gaol which stands by the church of Our Lady of Tears, the gaol that is all black and dreadful, and they put me in a stone cell, and there was no light; I was frightened. I screamed. Two guards came in and beat me, and they chained me to the floor. I had had nothing to eat. They brought me some water, but they held it in a pail to my mouth to drink, and most of it was spilled over. They left me some bread, but I could not eat. They left me alone a long, long time. They came in hours and hours after; I suppose it was night; it was all



dark. They had lanterns. "Ah, you are dainty, are you, gallows bird?" they said when they saw the bread uneaten; and they kicked and cuffed me. Then they went out and left me in the dark. I do not know how long it was before they came again. They took me out in the morning light. There was bright full sun in the passages. My head swam. They took me to a man sitting at a desk, all buttoned up with epaulettes on his shoulders. He said to me, "You may go. It was a mistake." And he wrote in a big book. "Take him outside and let him go," he said to the guards. "Here, you boy, say nothing; say only it was a mistake." And he gave me three gold pieces. Here they are.'

His mother and brothers and sisters crowded to look; they had never seen gold. But his father said:

'You should not have taken them. They had beaten you. Why did you take their money? Give them to me. I will ask the Great Man.'

So he always called Platon Illyris. Philemon gave them.

'I took them because I was afraid. I shall always be afraid——'

His voice was very low, his eyes were haggard, his limbs trembled with fever. His youth had gone out of him; it was unlikely that it would ever return. Beat a young dog brutally; he will never be the same dog again.

Janos went up to the house of Illyris; they already knew of the boy's arrival. When he had told his son's story he showed the gold which he held in his hand.

'Sir,' he said to Illyris, 'the Master of the gaol

gave Philemon these three pieces. Should he keep them ?'

'No,' said Illyris. 'Give them to me.'

Janos gave them.

'Child, bring me the little coffer,' said Illyris.

Ilia brought it ; a small and rusty box of iron, very strong, found many years before in the earth beneath the roots of an olive-tree blown down in a storm ; it was probably many centuries old.

Illyris opened it, took out three pieces of the same value, and gave them to Janos, taking those of the gaol in their stead.

Then at his table he wrote in his fine bold characters, a little tremulous from age :

*'If these three gold pieces are intended as the measure of your equity they are too much : if they are intended as the measure of your iniquity they are too little.'*

Then he signed his name Platon Illyris, put the paper and the coins under cover, and sealed them.

'Send Maïa with this to the gaol, and bid her see that they give it to the governor,' he said to Ilia. 'Let her go the first thing in the morning.'

'Is it the King's son who has set Philemon free ?' asked Janos.

'Ay, they can bind and loose,' said Illyris bitterly.

'Should we not thank him, sir ?' Ilia said with hesitation as Janos went away.

'Thank whom ?'

'The Duke of Othyris. It must be he who has caused the boy to be liberated.'

'Doubtless. Princes always say they have no

power, but they can bind and loose, as I said, at their pleasure !’

‘But at least when they act justly do they not deserve some gratitude like other men ?’

‘Their debt to Helianthus is as wide and as deep as the sea ; if one of them pay a trifle back, by some little act which costs him nothing, have the children of Helianthus any right or call to be thankful ? That is unworthy reasoning for a daughter of my race.’

‘Might not Janos go and watch for the Prince at the gates ?’

‘Who would open the gates to Janos ? You are mad.’

‘I believe those gates always stand open.’

‘They may. There are guards behind them.’

‘But when princes do well should they not meet with gratitude ? Would you not write a word for Janos, sir ?’

‘I ? Write to a Gunderöde ! You are mad, child.’

‘Will you allow me to write ?’

‘I forbid you most absolutely.’

She did not disobey. But obedience was painful to her. It seemed to her that they must appear barbarians in the eyes of Othyris. Sleep did not come to her until a late hour of the night ; she was thinking what she could do to show that she was not insensible to the act of the King’s son. Before the sun was visible upon the horizon, and the mists were still heavy and cold on all the dark slopes of the mountain, she went into the woods and gathered the bells of the fritillaria and the cups of the narcissus poeticus which were at that season growing thickly

under the mosses in all the olive woods, and fringed them with some young sprays of olives, and tied them with a plaited band of grass. She gave them to the woman Maïa to whom, overnight, had been given the sealed packet for the governor of the gaol.

‘When you are in the city,’ she said to the woman, ‘go first to the gaol and leave that packet as the Master told you to do. Then go to the house of the Duke of Othyris. It is in the Square of the Dioscuri. The gates always stand wide open. It has great groups of date palms before it. Watch until you see him come out of the courtyard, if you watch all day long. Then go to him, give him these wild flowers, and say, “She with whom I live thanks you.” Only those words. No others.’

The woman repeated the words three times to make sure of her remembrance of them ; then went on her way through the trees. She was a grave, worn, strong woman ; she had seen many troubles in her life, and had neither curiosity nor garrulosity. Seven hours passed before she returned.

Ilia went and sat down and waited for her, where the water tumbled down over the rocks and a turn in the hill-path showed the shining sea and the distant and glittering domes of the city.

She was disturbed, and the natural repose of her temperament was broken by a vague anxiety and unrest. Perhaps she had done wrong? she asked herself.

The dark figure of Maïa came in sight, black in the white light ; erect, although not young, she carried on her head a burden of useful necessary articles which she had bought in the city.

‘You saw him?’ asked Ilia, as she rose and went to meet her messenger.

‘I saw him,’ the woman answered.

‘What passed?’

‘That which you commanded should pass. I waited long. The young man came out of his palace. I made a sign to him. He knew me. He beckoned me to him. I said to him “She whom I serve thanks you.” His face grew bright. He took the flowers, and he turned back and went within. He would have given me money, but I put it away. It was all done in a moment. There were many people staring, and the guards of the street looked angry.’

‘You did well,’ said Ilia. ‘Good Maïa, go in and take your rest.’

Ilia remained there alone, looking down through the radiance of the noonday light, outward to the sea with its wide semicircle of golden coast and purple mountain.

‘I must say what I have done,’ she thought.

There was no sound in the still noontide, except that of a woodpecker striking his beak on the trunk of an oak. The silence and the radiance of the early spring-day were like a benediction. She rose with regret as the Ave Maria rang far down below, and she retraced her steps to the house.

She entered the presence of Illyris.

‘Sir,’ she said, ‘you will be angered, but I sent word by a message, by Maïa, that I thanked the son of the King for the freedom of Philemon.’

The face of Illyris grew very dark, like a storm which lowers in the hills.

‘I have suffered many things,’ he said harshly ;

‘but never before in my long life have I been disobeyed.’

‘Never have I dared to disobey you before,’ said Ilia ; ‘but I could not let a Gunderöde believe that the Illyris were ingrates.’

‘What matter what a Gunderöde may think !’ said Illyris with scorn. ‘You did wrong. But you inherit my temper. I cannot blame you for your heritage.’

He looked at her with a keen and searching gaze.

‘This young man pleases you?’ he added with suspicion.

‘I am sorry for him, sir.’

‘Wherefore?’

‘Because he is, by nature, just ; and he is in a position wherein he cannot be just in action ; he strives to do what good he can, but he knows that the utmost he can do is but a drop of clear water in a sea of mud.’

‘Whence got he his scruples?’

‘I know not.’

‘Is not he the son of Gregory’s grand-daughter by the grandson of Theodoric? What blood has he in his veins other than that of traitors to the people, traitors and tyrants? I must be in my dotage indeed when my word ceases to be law in my own house!’

‘I grieve to have offended you, sir ; but I could do no less.’

‘You did ill.’

She did not defend herself. She too thought she had done wrong in one sense, although right in another.

Illyris was silent, his eyes resting on her. She was calm and grave, with no embarrassment under his scrutiny. As was her habit, she had spoken in simple sincerity.

‘You may go to your room,’ said Illyris. He turned to the table beside him, and wrote a few lines to the second son of the King, the great-grandson of Theodoric :

*‘Young man, you have done a good action in restoring a child to his parents, and in saving an innocent from the pollution of prisons. You mean well, and I have no doubt of your good faith, but do not come here any more. Between Gunderöde and Illyris there is a gulf which can never be passed.’*

Then he signed and sealed the letter, and on the following day he sent it down to the palace in the Square of the Dioscuri.

To Ilia he did not speak of it. It had never been his habit to confide in women or to consult with them.

He trusted their affections, but he never trusted their intelligence.

For the first time her future troubled him with a sad sense of his own impotence. From want he could secure her ; absolute need she would never know ; but beyond this he could not ensure her peace or safety. She was alone ; and she was not of a temperament to make friendships easily or find interests in new spheres. She had too much of the granite and the steel of the Illyris in her.

Illyris felt that he had failed in his duty in his neglect of her ; and yet what could he have done?

She had inherited his strength ; he could only leave her to herself.

‘ Will you live on here when I am dead, Ilia ? ’ he asked her.

‘ Yes, ’ she answered, ‘ always. ’

She did not say, as others would have done, ‘ Do not speak of death, ’ because she knew that death stood beside his chair and beside his bed, and said, ‘ I am near, ’ every hour of the day and night. Neither he nor she used empty conventional phrases.

‘ But you may change your state, ’ he said to her ; ‘ you may marry. ’

‘ That is not likely, ’ she answered.

‘ Why ? You are young. ’

‘ It is not likely, ’ she repeated. ‘ It would not suit me, I think. I wed Aquilegia, ’ she added.

‘ Aquilegia is neither yours nor mine. ’

‘ I put away little sums as I can, and I hope to save enough to buy it some day. ’

‘ That is well. May Pallas Athene watch over you ! You are wiser than most women. ’

The price of Aquilegia, the house, the fields, the olives and the poplars, was small. It was but a hundred of the broad crowns of Helianthus ; those gold coins which had so deeply offended the national feeling of the people when they had been first issued bearing the arms and the effigy of Theodoric.

‘ It is like him, ’ said Othyris to himself, when he read those lines from the hero of the War of Independence.

He was not offended. He understood. He did not resent even the manner of address. He considered that Platon Illyris had the right to say what-



ever he chose to any Gunderöde. He knew that it would be best that he should go there no more. But he looked at a few wild wood-blossoms set in an old silver goblet on a table in his studio, and thought, 'Whatever betide I must go sometimes where those flowers grew.'

Not yet ; for he would seem to the peasants to go there to receive their guerdon of gratitude, and to Illyris would appear to go in contempt of the power of a man so old to enforce his will.

## CHAPTER XXI

OTHYRIS had been by sea to his estate of Ænothrea, and was returning thence on board his sailing-yacht, when a small boat with a lateen sail bore down towards the royal schooner, and a man within it held up one of his oars in a gesture of appeal. Othyris, standing on deck, saw the signal, and caused his yacht to slacken speed and await the little craft. The fisherman, who alone occupied the boat, came to the schooner's side and held up a letter.

‘Take it and bring it hither,’ commanded Othyris ; and when he received it, he found it was a note in the cypher which Ednor used in writing to him. He had the boatmen dismissed with a handful of silver, and went down into his cabin to decipher the message, which was very brief. It told him that Platon Illyris had died on the previous day, and that Ednor was perforce leaving Helios to avoid arrest for an article in his journal on the life and death of the hero, for which his personal seizure was now ordered by the State. He had known that the yacht was expected to return that day, and had sent one of his fisher friends to watch for its appearance in the offing.

Othyris read the message with emotion. The grave could not give more complete oblivion to that great life than men in old age had given to it ; yet its

end in such isolation, in such ingratitude, hurt him. His return to the city was made as rapidly as was possible ; but when he reached the harbour of the Soleia it was noon on the following day, and the journal conducted by Ednor had taken the tidings of the death of Illyris amongst the populace ; the newspapers of the noble and commercial classes did not vouchsafe a line to his memory, nor even announce his decease. It was through him that they were living there in peace without a foreign occupation to harass and despoil them, but it had long ago been decided for them that all their gratitude was due alone to the now reigning House of Gunderöde.

When Othyrus landed he drove rapidly to his palace, changed his yachting clothes for those of mourning, and entered a closed carriage, of which he drew down the blinds. He took no one of his gentlemen with him. The horses were driven by his order towards Aquilegia. He had no clear plan or definite intention in his mind ; his impulse was to go to Ilia ; she was desolate indeed ; probably, he thought, she would not accept any protection or counsel from him, but he would at least offer them. He passed unnoticed through the city ; his carriage was undistinguishable from any other gentleman's brougham, and he saw no signs of any especial movement in the streets. The dead hero had belonged to an almost forgotten past. The memory of a populace is evanescent as the dew of the daybreak. But as he drew near the poor quarters which led towards the Gate of Olives, these narrow, ancient thoroughfares seemed to be unusually hushed whilst unusually thronged by people. The doors and windows of the old, lofty, lowering stone houses were for the most part closed, and

their inhabitants were in the narrow, paven roads ; but their usual noisy cries, and rough altercations, and bursts of song, and shrill oaths, were all stilled ; the people were very quiet, and they were moving, as by one accord, towards the lofty marble gate, which had seen the passing of the triumphs and the funerals of two thousand years before. There were more street guards than usual in the lanes and roads ; they did not interfere, but they were in threes and fours together, and looked sullen, suspicious, ready to use their arms on the first excuse.

Othyris understood without questioning any one. The people were going to honour the dead body of Platon Illyris in whatever way they might be able to do so.

The news of the death of Illyris had awakened the dormant memories of the populace. His life had belonged to a past generation ; his memory had been faint in the thoughts of the living multitudes ; that he was near them in a still breathing presence had never been realised. But with one of those great waves of nervous feeling which move the multitudes of men in cities, as the ocean is moved by subterranean forces, the plebs of Helios had been stirred by Ednor's article on the dying hero into a sudden consciousness of its own ingratitude, and of the claims on it of its long-neglected deliverer.

In the noble and commercial quarters of the city there was no agitation ; only annoyance and a vague fear, the sense of an unwelcome ghost arisen and intrusive. But in the poor quarters stretching towards the west, and down to the port, the awakening was general and repentant. The name of Illyris

ran like a fiery messenger through the crowds, almost as in the years of their grandsires' youth.

Into their pale blood, dulled by the monotony of modern toil, some warmth of an earlier spirit entered; into the heavy hopelessness and sullen covetousness, which grow together in the breast of the sons of labour, there arose some purer, finer recollection and desire. It was far away from them, that epopee of their grandsires, and the fruits of its heroism had been reaped by others than themselves, but some reflection from the glow of its heroism fell on them and illumined the narrow chambers of their joyless and sunless souls. From them to others who felt less, and who understood nothing, the electrical current of sympathy ran as the magnetism of evil or of good always flows through the unconsciousness of crowds. Thousands and tens of thousands were thrilled from head to foot, wept, moved, echoed, strove, pressed onward and upward, scarcely knowing why, but crying 'Illyris! Illyris!' as the crowds in all ages shout Adonai or Barabbas, as the suggestionism of numbers makes them do. Women dishevelled and bare-bosomed; children thrown down, crushed; struggling youths and maidens madly waving boughs of laurel, as in the Daphnephoria of old; the bronzed, half-nude porters and stevedores of the quays; fishers, and mariners, and boatmen from the harbours; the workers from factory, and engine-room, and cellar; the pluckers of pelts, the makers of chemicals, the marble-workers, the bird-snarers, the rag-pickers, the sea-weed gleaners, the carpet-weavers, the killers and cleaners of fish; all the innumerable divisions of the great, weary, hungry classes, who thronged together between the centre of the city and

the Gate of Olives, in swarms like the conies of the sand plains,—all these with one impulsion pushed against each other in their upward way, and, now breaking their silence, shouted as with one voice :

‘To the Pantheon! To the House of the Immortals! Bury him by Theodoric!’

In ever-increasing numbers, and now with deafening cries, they struggled, like a shoal of fish pushing through a weir, up the road which led towards the olive orchards of Aquilegia. The police did not interfere, but they were reinforced by detachments of carabineers, mounted, with their arms shining in the sun.

There joined the crowd from other quarters of the town students, artists, artisans of a higher class, and also the unemployed,—those unemployed by choice, and those in enforced idleness through misadventure, all the gabies and all the loiterers who come out into the streets when there is anything to see or hear in them; but the multitude remained, in its vast majority, essentially of the populace.

Othyrus had got out of his carriage before the first stragglers had arrived at the foot of the ascent to Aquilegia, and had taken the familiar path which wound up amongst the olive-trees,—the precipitous bridle-path which he had taken on his first visit to Illyris; he hoped to reach the house before the crowds from the town could do so. He was out of the sight of the throngs, who were still at the base of the hill, but the sound of their shrill outcries reached him as he mounted the mule-track between the great trees; he could even distinguish the words, ‘To the House of the Immortals! To the House of the Immortals!’

‘Surely,’ he thought, ‘if any should lie in that House, he has supreme right to do so.’

The atmosphere was glorious with light and warmth ; the deep-blue skies seen between the boughs, the golden shafts of sunlight, the shimmering silver of the vault of olive leaves, the shining marble and jasper and porphyry dust beneath his feet, the emerald lizards, the brilliant ruby gladiolus, the bright gold of the tansy discs, were all dazzling in the radiance of morning ; but for once his soul was without response ; he was harassed by regret, by doubt, by apprehension.

Would the noonday pass without bloodshed ?

Would his father’s government be tolerant of this gathering ?

Would the demand for the burial be granted ?

And Ilia Illyris ? What would she do ?

The sounds of the shouting people, low down at the foot of the hills, were borne to his ear through the sweet sylvan silence. He hastened onward, hoping to see her, to be able to warn her in time to keep the bier within the house, and thus to avoid all which might appear collusion with the public demonstration. But as the mule-path took a sharp narrow bend to the right, he saw, on another curve above, under the olives, a coffin borne on the shoulders of Janos and of five labouring men, and behind it the veiled figure of a woman. His heart stood still with emotion. It was the figure of a solitary mourner coming slowly down the side of Mount Atys with all that remained to her on earth of relative or friend.

If she went downward another mile, he knew that she would inevitably meet the people of Helios as

they ascended. At any cost of repulse or offence he felt that he must for her own sake arrest her on her dangerous path. He went out from the shade of the great trees and with uncovered head approached her, raising his hand in a gesture, which made the bearers of the dead body pause, the bier resting on their shoulders.

She paused also ; he could not see her face, not even her eyes, through the black gauze.

‘Even in such an hour as this!’ she said, as if to herself, in wonder and repugnance ; even in such an hour could he not leave her alone !

Othyris, with his head uncovered, stood reverently by the side of the coffin.

‘Go back,’ he said to her, ‘go back, I entreat you. There are thousands of people coming up the hill. They come in all honour and reverence, but there are rough men and coarse women amongst them ; many have come up from the docks and the lowest quarters, and their excitement is increasing every moment. Go back, whilst there is time.’

She did not move ; she only imperfectly understood his meaning ; she heard the sounds like the swell of the angry sea, which came from the foot of the hill, but she did not know that it was the muttering of human voices which blent with the familiar murmur of the breakers on the shore below. The bearers lowered the coffin gently to the ground, and stood, bareheaded, listening.

‘Is it the people of Helios who at last remember him, do you say?’ she said, with a great calmness in her voice. ‘It is late ; too late !’

‘It is too late indeed,’ said Othyris with emotion.

‘They cannot hinder his going to his last rest.



Let me pass, sir, I only take him to the graveyard of the poor.'

'They would take him to the Pantheon.'

'That would surely be his right?'

'Undoubtedly, but the matter will not pass without conflict, trouble, perhaps bloodshed. The crowd is honest and penitent, but it is rough. There will be scenes unfit for you, unseemly for his memory. Go back to the house, I entreat you.'

'Why? I do not fear the people of my father's city.'

'They will not harm you by intention. As their mood is now, they would die for you, but you do not know what a perilous and inflammable thing is a mob. I fear, also, they will not be allowed to return peacefully to the city. I mean that they will not be permitted to bear this coffin to the mausoleum, as they wish to do. There will be, I fear, collision and conflict between them and those in authority.'

'With your father's communal guards, with your father's troops?'

'With the guards of the city, with the troops of the State.'

'I understand. The Gunderöde will fear him, even dead! They will find him, even dead, too great; as the corpse of the Guise seemed to the Valois! Janos, go onward.'

The labourers bent down, and raised the coffin to their shoulders.

'Wait! Wait, for pity's sake,' cried Othyris, despairing to move her by any reasoning. 'He who lies hidden from us in that shell lived forty years in silence and obscurity to avoid all danger of strife and bloodshed which might have arisen from the magic

of his name. Do not risk those dangers now over his dead body. He would bid you not run the risk of insurrection and military intervention.

‘I do not speak to you of any peril you yourself may run,’ he continued, after vainly waiting for some answer or some sign. ‘I know that personal fear would not weigh with you for an instant. But he would be the first to stand between the people and their impulses, could he now arise from the dead. I can imagine no greater grief to him than for his name to become the cause of strife.’

She was silent.

On the lips of any other speaker the words would have touched her heart and convinced her. On his they had a taint of self-interest, of authority, of that menace of the power of the State which had never been heard by Illyris with tolerance or obedience, and against which all the principles of those she had loved had been arrayed.

‘Lady,’ said Othyris, with great emotion in his voice, ‘no one ever lived who had more reverence for the dead than I. You cannot doubt my entire good faith, or the sincerity of my counsels. I entreat you not to make this sacred bier a cause of strife and bloodshed, the beginning of civil war. I will answer to you and to the people of Helios that the uttermost shall be done to obtain for his memory due honour, and for his tomb a fitting place. But, in his name, I implore you not to lend yourself to what will degenerate into party odium, not to embitter this solemn hour with fratricidal hatreds. If his dead lips could speak, he would surely say to you : “Go back, my daughter ; go back.”’

She listened ; her head drooped, the veil shadowing

her features ; the accent of his voice went to her heart ; she felt his sincerity, she felt his wisdom ; she was conscious that to resist his counsel was to be headstrong, unwise, unworthy.

‘Take up the coffin,’ she said to the men who had brought it there. ‘Let us return to the house, and await nightfall.’

They obeyed her without a word.

Othyris bowed very low before her, as people bowed to him.

‘I thank you,’ he said humbly. ‘I will now go and speak to the people, and hear their wishes.’

The bearers and their sacred burden remounted the narrow, rocky path under the great olives, Ilia Illyris walking beside them. Othyris descended the hill in the direction of the ascending mob of people ; the confused shrill clamour of whose voices and the louder chorus of the Hymn of Eos rose upward from the lower slopes and from the beach.

He was wholly uncertain of his own power to control or to persuade them ; he was well aware that in their present enthusiastic and enraged temper they might see in him only an enemy, only a scion of Theodoric of Gunderöde. He could not tell what their mood might be, or what reception even to ferocity they might not give him.

But all he thought of was Ilia’s safety, and the necessity of saving the city from insurrection. The popular temper was like melinite ; a spark might cause a ruin incalculable and irremediable.

A few minutes brought him within sight of the earliest stragglers of the throng ; they recognised his tall and slender form as he came down through the silvery olive foliage.

‘Elim! Elim!’ cried the foremost men. ‘Elim! Give him his rightful place of burial! Let him lie by Theodoric!’

They pressed forward to reach the King’s son, who in their eyes was all-powerful, in whom they were disposed to trust, but in whom, nevertheless, they could not feel sure that they had an ally or a protector.

He was well known and was beloved in those poor quarters whence came these throngs of working-people, and by the shore which sent forth the stevedores, the porters, the boatmen, the stokers, the fishermen; but they could not be sure how far they had his support in the temerity of their demand on the Crown.

He was always their protector and friend, but they could not be sure if they could rely on his assistance against his father; and of the King’s antagonism and refusal they could have no doubt.

He was only one man against many thousands, but as he came towards them, out of the deep shade of the trees, he awed them. In his serenity, his composure, his simplicity, he appealed to their respect; and by that difference from themselves which was in him he forced from them a not unwilling admiration, a vague consciousness of superiority.

He uncovered his head as he approached them, and they cheered him. They knew that there was great courage in his action.

He mounted a boulder of rock by the roadside which made a natural rostrum, and stood there a little above them. As far as they could be seen for the trees the people were in great numbers, and the sound of the footsteps of the ascending masses

answered the sound of the sea dashing angrily on the beach far below.

‘My friends,’ said Othyris, ‘you and I have come doubtless on the same errand, in the same feelings,—honour for the great man who has left us. What is that you would do? What is it that you desire?’

‘To take his body to the House of the Immortals,’ shouted a hundred speakers; all the men who were foremost and nearest, and the shriller voices of the women and children and youths, echoed the cry: ‘To the House of the Immortals!’

‘What were you about to do to obtain your end?’

A clamour of innumerable voices rose in chorus; in the confusion of sound he could distinguish their threats to seize the bier and bear it through the city, and before the palace of the Soleia demand from the King the burial of Illyris beside Theodoric. He knew that if they carried out their threat his father would only reply by the bayonets or the musketry of his troops. John of Gunderöde would not parley with his populace. It was a perilous moment; they were in a perilous mood. When an idea possesses a crowd, it is obstinate with the obstinacy of the insane. It was very probable that if Othyris thwarted them in their present mood they would turn their fury upon him. He was one against a multitude; he was unarmed; they might seize him as a hostage or they might slay him as a scapegoat. No one can ever say what form the delirium of a mass of people may not take.

But Othyris felt that their actual mood must be dominated or there would be bloodshed in Helios. He raised his hand to ask for silence, and little by little the loud tumultuous cries died down. Swaying

and pressing around the rock on which he stood, the people waited to hear him speak.

‘My friends,’ he said to them, ‘your desire is natural and just. Do not imperil its fulfilment by violence or haste. Do not go upward to the house where he dwelt, for there are only women, who would be alarmed. First, obtain the certainty that you may lay his body in the Pantheon of Helios ; then come hither to fetch it. If you begin with riot and clamour, you will fail in your demand, and you will prove yourselves unworthy of your self-imposed mission.’

An angry hissing protest followed on his words. They were in no mood for reason. They were in the mood for revolution ; and Othyris knew that his father would no more treat with them or argue with them than a huntsman with his hounds. If they could not be induced to go to their homes quietly there could be no issue except insurrection. He had never before seen an angry mob, for he had always been welcomed everywhere with a sincere and often an enthusiastic attachment. It is an ugly and a formidable spectacle at all times. The strong smell from their unwashed flesh and their unclean clothes tainted the fresh mountain air, stifled the odours of the flowers and grasses. ‘O humanity ! what a dread beast you are !’ he thought, as all must do who see it in its nakedness, stripped of hypocritical pretence and the cover of courtesy. But such as it was he had to deal with it and dominate it, or hundreds of them would go up to the house of Ilia and would profane the peace and solemnity of death. He looked down on the inflamed faces of the men, the nude breasts of the women, the tangled hair and menacing eyes of the

youths, the laurel boughs broken and dust-covered, the little children alarmed and clinging to their mothers' skirts; he could hear the trampling on the rocky road of many others not as yet in sight; the frightened birds flew out from the foliage, the clear brooks ran across the road, over the soiled, bare feet, and, touching human flesh, became defiled.

'People of Helios!' said Othyris, and his voice was far-reaching as the note of a clarion. 'People of Helios, hearken to me. You must go back to your homes in peace and decency, or I can be with you in nothing. It is wrong and impious to make a great hero's death a moment for disorder and riot. You can accomplish nothing by brawling. The tomb of Illyris ought to be made where the great men of Helianthus lie——'

'Was Theodoric a Helianthine?' a man called from the crowd.

'No; he was not,' Othyris answered calmly. 'But that is beside this question. Illyris was a pure-bred Helianthine, and you desire that he should have his sepulchre made in the mausoleum of the country. Well, go back to your homes, and I promise that you shall have your desire; but I will do nothing for menace or insult.'

The multitude was silent. The courage of his speech and the calmness and dignity of his bearing impressed them. But one voice shouted from the close-pressed throng:

'You promise, you say! You are a prince. Who can trust princes?'

'You may trust me,' said Othyris coldly. 'I give you my word that the body of Platon Illyris shall lie in the House of the Immortals.'

‘The word of a Gunderöde!’ said an angry, rude voice from an unseen speaker.

Othyris coloured with pain rather than offence.

‘The word of a gentleman,’ he said briefly.

The people cheered him.

‘The word of an honest man,’ said one of their leaders. ‘We will trust him, friends. If he fail us, we can chastise.’

‘He will not fail,’ said a woman.

A man who was a worker in metal and had a fine countenance and a lofty stature shouted in a clear resounding voice :

‘Let us trust him. If he fail us he shall answer to us. And whether by peace or by force Illyris shall lie with Theodoric.’

‘It shall be so,’ said Othyris. ‘Now go, my friends, to your homes. So you will best do his will. He lived in solitude and obscurity for forty years rather than cause disunion amongst his countrymen. If the State forgot him, you also, his people, his children, remembered too little.’

The conscience of the throng was moved, its remorse was stirred, its regrets were stung to the quick ; the men and the youths were silent, and the sobs of some women were audible in the stillness.

‘Go to your homes,’ said Othyris. ‘We will meet soon again.’

Then he descended from the stone platform, and uncovered his head in farewell to the multitude.

A loud, long, echoing cheer rose from the ranks of the populace. They had faith in him.

They pressed around him ; they were curious, grateful, excited, awed ; they wanted to see him close, to feel his clothes, to touch his hand, to see



him face to face ; they were dangerous out of the excess of their enthusiasm, for they were unwilling to let him go.

‘Come with us ! Come with us !’ they shouted ; they wanted to take him down in triumph into Helios.

But he knew that if he were seen with them all possible chance of gaining the realisation of their wish would be destroyed. It was impossible that he should enter the city as the companion and the leader of this mob.

‘Fall back. Leave me free,’ he said to them. ‘If you detain me, if you hamper me, you will render it impossible for me to obtain you the fulfilment of your wish. My friend,’ he added, turning to the man who had said ‘Let us trust him,’ ‘you have influence over them, keep them back. Leave me free. Otherwise I can do nothing. Nor will I, by any force which they can use, go down into Helios in their company.’

There was a savage, sullen muttering of chagrin and of offence in the people nearest to him. They were offended, and they were conscious that they could by brute force make their offence felt.

‘People of Helios,’ said Othyrus, ‘you can kill me if you like ; I am unarmed, and you are many in numbers. But you cannot make me do what I do not choose to do, or what I think unworthy. Let me pass.’

‘Let him pass,’ said the man who had said ‘Let us trust him.’ The people hesitated ; Othyrus took advantage of that hesitation ; he shook off the hand laid upon him, and with tranquillity and dignity passed through them to the woods on the opposite

side of the road. Thence there ran a by-path, concealed by the darkness of the deep shade, which led down towards the shore ; Janos had one day shown him that woodland way. He was at once lost to the sight of the crowd in the dark foliage of the close-growing trees.

‘If he fail us, we shall know how to avenge it,’ said the man from the docks once more.

## CHAPTER XXII

THE official spies and professional informers, with whom Helios, like all modern cities, was infested, had of course, as soon as these events happened, informed the authorities of what had occurred and of what was menaced. The troops were immediately confined to barracks ; the guns of the fortresses turned upon the town ; the sentinels doubled, and all those precautions taken which render a successful insurrection almost an impossibility in any modern and monarchical country.

The demonstration had taken the Government by surprise and found them unprepared ; and the alarm bells of telegraph and telephone were ringing frantically wherever the governing forces of civil and military control were located. But the people were peaceable, though enthusiastic and excited ; and the Ministry decided that they should not be interfered with, so long as no revolutionary cries were heard and no revolutionary emblems displayed.

Michael Soranis, who had succeeded Kantakuzene when the latter was defeated over the Crown Prince's scheme for the fortification of the Hundred Isles, was still Prime Minister. As a politician he was considered eminently safe, and slow, and sure ; he had been often in office when the monarch or the

country had been desirous of quiet and sleep. He was adroit, conciliatory, plausible, with no stiffness of backbone, or disagreeable stability of principle, about him. It was hard on such a Minister to be confronted with a dilemma so difficult, an obstinacy so painful. Soranis was essentially an opportunist ; he had been a physician in early life, and knew how to sooth excited pulses, lower high temperatures, persuade to painful cures, and amiably divert diseased fancies ; but this position required strength, and he was not strong.

He had entered the arena of politics on the buck-jumping galloway of Radicalism ; but it had been always unsuited to his taste and powers, and he had for many years seated himself more comfortably on the park-hack of Liberal Conservatism. He liked to amble smoothly over the tan, in the circus of high office, with the diamond stars due to successful equestrianism on his breast.

This affair, which was a great disturbance, almost an insurrection, troubled him greatly. It was unexpected, inconvenient, dangerous, and most ill-timed. Like many active political events it had sprung out of a mustard-seed fallen in a gutter, and might be big with confusion and convulsion. It was a water-spout in a clear sky. It was a heat-wave in a cool land. It was a falling mast on a winning schooner. It was a squirming black squib in a bather's sunny creek. It was any imaginable torment which could upset the desirable, and create the perilous. Go which way it would, end how it might, it would cause him to be assailed equally by hostile and by friendly groups in the Chamber. It was a ball of pins with all the points set outward.

Let him take it and hold it as he would, he must inevitably be pricked by it. He would almost certainly please none by his treatment of it. He would quite certainly offend either the King or the nation.

Like all successful men Soranis had many enemies. He knew that these would all eagerly seize on this incident as on a dead cat to throw at him. True, the Chambers were not then sitting; it was the brief recess of Pentecost; but time intensifies malice, as it adds to the bitterness of the brandy in which peach kernels are steeped. He knew that his enemies would not let a single point against him rest, or lose by waiting. What also complicated his responsibility was that the King and the Crown Prince were away shooting, having left the city at dawn for one of the royal forests in the hills.

He felt that the position was a cruel and unjust one for a politician who had never failed to trim his course with the most skilful and scientific navigation. The terrible mixture of the Danish Hamlet and the English Henry the Fifth which seemed to him united in the person of Othyris appeared to him more perilous to himself and his Cabinet than any number of anarchical conspiracies. He admired Othyris; he recognised the charm, the talent, the courage, the altruism of the King's second son; but he felt that a revolutionary prince was a sore difficulty in the path of a Minister of the Crown, who only asked of fate to be all things to all men.

All Soranis had desired and tried to bring about had been that peace external and internal should last his time and let him die in office; that the nation should be quiet and orderly, reasonable and pliable,

should never be noisy or quarrelsome and create embarrassments, either at home or abroad. This was, he thought, the least the Helianthines could do in return for his own admirable government ; a beautiful buoy of cork floating serenely on an oiled sea. Yet, behold them ! Up in arms, and baying like the brutes they really were ; with no gratitude for the smooth years of subsidised commerce and increased national debt which he himself had given them ! The throne, the army, the navy, the exchequer, the police, the church, had always been kept by him in respect and prosperity, following each other in harmonious sequence like the Corinthian columns of a temple portico ; and these ignorant and yelling crowds, who knew nothing of the beauties of political architecture, were endeavouring to resuscitate the memory of a forgotten patriot whose shade was as much to be dreaded by authority as the ghost of Hamlet's father by Hamlet's step-father !

Soranis felt that he had neither the years nor the temper to cope with such a position, and, as though the question in itself was not thorny and difficult enough, there was added to it the extreme embarrassment of the entrance into it of the King's second son.

The Minister was no stranger to the permanent differences existing between the father and the son. More than once these had strained all his tact and persuasiveness to the utmost in the effort to prevent the friction from becoming visible to others ; and a perverse fate seemed to accumulate causes and reasons for their divergence. To him, as to the royal family, the perversity of Elim seemed diabolical.

Born to the most enviable fate that the heart of

man could desire, why could he not be content with it? To Soranis, son of a provincial apothecary, and a struggling professional man himself in early manhood, it seemed monstrous that a prince could be dissatisfied with his lot. Therefore, when Othyris said to him, 'I have given my word to the people that Illyris shall be buried in the Pantheon,' nothing but the extreme reverence for rank of a democrat who has been converted to reactionism could have restrained him from a choleric and irreverent imprecation.

Instead of such a natural ebullition of temper, he said, nervously, and with a sigh :

'I fear, sir, that your Royal Highness did not realise, did not consider sufficiently, the extreme embarrassment which such a promise on your part would cause to the government.'

'I did not think of the government, certainly,' said Othyris.

'Nor of His Majesty,' said Soranis, timidly and tentatively.

'Where does my father come into this question?' said Othyris.

Soranis made a little deprecatory murmur of protest.

Where, he thought, did His Majesty not enter, all-pervading essence of will and conscience as he was? Who should or would be concerned in the question of a burial in the House of Immortals, if not the monarch who considered his grandsire the first of all immortals?

Othyris knew well that to the King the demand for the interment of Illyris under the same dome with Theodoric would appear a blasphemy, a treason, an

unspeakable infamy ; but he did not intend to discuss that side of the subject. He waited a while for some more complete reply from Soranis. Failing to receive one, he said :

‘Your Excellency cannot fail, I imagine, to perceive the stringent necessity which exists that the warrant of my word shall be made good by all the powers responsible for law and order ?’

‘No doubt, sir, no doubt,’ murmured Soranis, but with no great firmness of tone. ‘No doubt your Royal Highness must be supported.’

In his own mind he saw vividly two pictures : the one of a crowd which would comprehend no arguments except cannon ; the other of a monarch who would neither understand nor endure any arguments whatever. He himself was between Scylla and Charybdis.

‘You can only support me,’ replied Othyris, ‘by carrying out my promise to the people.’

Soranis nervously balanced a paper-knife on his finger.

‘Would it not have been possible, sir, for you to—to—have avoided the incident altogether ?’

‘I did not wish to avoid it. I sought it. But it is quite useless to discuss this part of the question now. What has been done cannot be altered.’

‘May I ask, sir, did the mob seem to you to be getting beyond the control of the police ?’

‘The *people* were orderly and reasonable,’ said Othyris, with emphasis ; he resented the epithet of mob. ‘The police did not interest or occupy me at all.’

The Minister drew himself up a little stiffly. To touch with irreverence these guardians of the State is,



in the eyes of a Minister, to use a chasuble and a reliquary as a cigar-box and a spittoon ; the priests of the altars of authority would burn the sacrilegious profaners if they dared.

‘The civil-servants of order risk their lives, sir,’ he said coldly.

‘They are armed to the teeth,’ said Othyris as coldly.

‘I lament, sir,’ murmured Soranis with reproach, ‘that you do not recognise all that government owes to them.’

‘I beg your Excellency,’ said Elim with impatience, ‘not to let us waste time in discussing the virtues of your *agents de sûreté*. I come to you to know if you will keep the pledge which I gave to the people of this city in the name of the State. You will not, I imagine, be willing to dishonour my word.’

‘Pray, sir, consider,’ said Soranis in agitation. ‘As I understand from yourself and from others present, you have assured the citizens of Helios that the body of Platon Illyris shall be buried with public honours in the Pantheon?’

‘Precisely.’

‘You are of opinion, sir, that you avoided a revolt and persuaded them to disperse quietly by making this promise?’

‘I repeat, I told them that, if they would go to their homes without disturbance, their wishes as regards the dead man should be respected and carried out ; and though they had certainly no cause to trust me, being who I am, they were good enough to have faith in my word and to separate tranquilly. It is absolutely certain that the government must ratify my promise, or disgrace me so utterly in my own

sight, and that of the country's, that I would not live a day under the weight of such opprobrium.'

'Pray, sir, pray!' said Soranis, with a feeble, imploring gesture of his hands. 'You forget, sir, you most unfortunately forget, that not your Royal Highness, nor myself, nor my colleagues, are free agents; the only supreme arbiter in this, as in all matters, is His Majesty the King.'

'You exaggerate my father's power, which you seem to forget is not absolute; it happily stops short of enforcing any man living into the business of tricking a nation.'

'But, sir—but, sir—pardon me, you had no title to give that promise; it is invalid; it is no more than a minor's signature to a donation.'

'It is invalid if the government do not ratify it; that is, I alone am impotent to enforce your fulfilment of it. I am as impotent as the minor to whom you compare me. But there is one thing of which I am master, and that is my own life. I will not live as a liar in the sight of a multitude that trusted me. Let the body of Platon Illyris be laid in state in the Pantheon, and let his tomb be made there. It is nothing strange or wrong. He will but have his rightful place, here in the heart of Helios, beside the man to whom he gave a kingdom. What is it for you to do? Nothing. But if it be as hard as to move mountains, and to dry up seas, you will do it. I tell you I will not break my faith with the people of Helios.'

'Sir, sir,' muttered the unhappy Minister, 'you ask of me impossibilities, you expect miracles; you must know that His Majesty, your father, will never allow the bones of the revolutionary Illyris to be laid

by the hallowed dust of the Great Theodoric. It is out of all question. To speak of such a project even to His Majesty would be an outrage !’

Othyris passed over the protest, as too puerile to call for refutation.

‘It is for your Excellency to make His Majesty the King understand that the will of the people in this matter must be done. You will only have to show the Red Spectre. My father does not love the Red Spectre.’

‘He has never quailed before its apparition, sir !’

‘No? Are you sure?’

Soranis met the eyes of his visitor and did not support their inquiry very steadily.

‘It is impossible. It is impossible,’ he said in ever-increasing agitation. ‘Set my devotion to your House to any other test, sir !’

‘This, and no other,’ replied Othyris. ‘In twenty-four hours’ time let the body of Platon Illyris lie under the dome of the mausoleum.’

Soranis shook like a leaf.

‘If this young man ever be king !’ he thought ; he felt that if that ever came to pass, such Ministries as that of the Soranian would be things of the past.

‘His Majesty is shooting at Rodonthe,’ said Soranis helplessly.

‘Send to him there.’

‘I dare not, sir, I dare not !’

‘It is your duty.’

‘Sir, His Majesty will not be disturbed by any Minister when he is engaged in the chase.’

‘A Minister must disregard such orders when there is question of the public weal.’

But Soranis was not a man to place the public

weal first and the royal will second. When he ate the breast of a pheasant shot by a sovereign it seemed to him of more exquisite flavour than that of ordinary pheasants ; and no doubt the public thought so too, for poulterers found it answer their purpose to ticket game exposed for sale in their shops, 'Shot by H.M. the King.' The nobility smiled ; the populace laughed ; but the middle classes purchased and ate. We know that in all lands the middle classes are the backbone, the spinal marrow, the moral and mental medulla of the nation ; but the spine is a little too ready to bend. Soranis, born of them, kept their soul though he rose above their class and changed his shape.

'Why not see His Majesty yourself, sir ?' he said nervously. 'Your eloquence——'

'My eloquence,' said Othyris, 'would but act as an irritant. My father and I are not friends.'

Soranis gave a gesture of entreaty and pain.

'Then what a task you set me, sir !'

'Let me hear from you at my own residence,' said Othyris, tired of argument ; then, humbly accompanied by the Minister into the open air, he took his leave.

Soranis returned to his library and threw himself into a deep chair, a limp, quivering, silent, helpless little figure, his grey head bowed upon his hands. He had not the slightest intention of going to Rondonthe ; no one ever disturbed the King when shooting. He loved power, he loved dignities, he loved the indulgence of nepotism, the pleasures of patronage ; he loved his Court dress, the insignia of great orders ; he loved the deputations at railway stations, and the banquets in municipal halls ; he loved the panegyrics

of the home newspapers and the applause of the foreign Press ; he loved the familiar intercourse with sovereigns, the smiles of royal women, the luxury of special trains, the whole atmosphere of homage of success, of ambition gratified and of far heights scaled, of lucrative investments made easy by early knowledge of coming events ; and all these pleasures, the crown of life, were imperilled for him by a mad young man and a crazy crowd ! Soranis, for the first time in his career, felt that the uncertainty of circumstance, and the pressure of accident, are unjust factors in the careers of successful and self-made men.

Soranis was a great believer in soporifics, politically called trimming ; he was always the advocate of middle courses, of safe concessions, of slow and careful steering of the ship of the State. The events of the morning as he understood them in outline troubled him infinitely, and the part which the Heir-Presumptive to the throne had taken troubled him still more. It would be impossible for the government to disown the act of a prince of the blood ; and it seemed to him quite as impossible that the government should ratify it or that the monarch should condone it. A solution of the dilemma would have been possible to an extremely reactionist, or to a frankly revolutionary Ministry ; but to his, which was a see-saw between the two, and pre-eminently conciliatory, the difficulty was overwhelming.

Obsequious though Soranis was to Othyris, nothing would induce him to send a messenger to Rodonthe ; and Othyris hesitated to send one himself, knowing that any direct communication from himself could only embitter and prejudice the cause he had under-

taken to support. There was nothing to be done but to await the return of the monarch from Rodonthe ; and no one knew when this would take place.

Soranis came to the palace of Othyris two hours later after a painful period of indecision and distress.

‘I have decided, sir,’ said Soranis with dejection and a nervous movement of his thin small hands, ‘that I cannot take upon myself the task which you, sir, have allotted to me. I cannot in conscience recommend His Majesty to take such a course as the admittance of the remains of an Illyris to the Pantheon of this city. I dare not, sir, even broach such a subject to the King. I am unequal to all which would ensue, did I do so. I am old, I am unwell ; I am wholly unable, sir, to go through such trying scenes as must ensue on such a demand. When I have audience with His Majesty I shall merely tender my resignation on the score of my health and my inability to cope with the present situation, and advise him to send for His Excellency Demetrius Kantakuzene, to whom such a mission as your Royal Highness has confided to me will probably appear at once sympathetic, and of a piece with his opinions and interests.’

He paused, coughing to hide his emotion, for he suffered acutely.

*Adieu, veau, vache, cochon, couvée !* He was more to be pitied than the girl of the fable, for he had possessed the eggs and the chickens, had killed the fat pigs and pickled them, and had cow and calf in his byre. He had enjoyed all the charms of office, and might have done so for years to come, but for the quixotic folly of a headstrong young man.

‘You have decided wisely, I think,’ replied

Othyris coldly. 'But in this manner much time will be lost, and time in this matter is all important. Send Kantakuzene unofficially to me to-night.'

'What, sir?' murmured Soranis aghast. 'To see you—before being summoned by the Crown! Such a step would be wholly without precedent, wholly unconstitutional.'

'Oh, I do not mind being unconstitutional!' said Elim, with the smile which his elder brother found so impertinent. 'The Constitution is a rickety fabric and does not impress me!'

'Oh, sir,' exclaimed Soranis, 'I entreat your Royal Highness to weigh what you say!'

'And I entreat your Excellency to waste no more time,' said Othyris with impatience and authority. 'If you desire and intend to resign as soon as my father returns, I beg of you, in some way or another, to send this, with my message to the deputy for Concordia.'

He held out a slender key which he had taken out of his waistcoat pocket.

'Give him this pass-key. The trustiest of my friends will meet him and bring him to me. You will not go to him personally, no doubt. But your Excellency must send some safe and confidential person to him, for he must be here before my father's return from Rodonthe. I pray your Excellency to lose no time. Do not force me to remind you that my honour is pledged to the people of Helios.'

Soranis was like a tortured animal held immovable to endure electrical shocks.

'I entreat your Royal Highness to reflect that you may some day be called on by Providence to rule over this realm!' he murmured feebly.

‘God forbid that day should ever dawn!’ said Othyris. ‘It is, I think, improbable that wild boars will have killed *both* my father and my brother this morning at Rodonthe!’

‘Oh, sir! How is it possible to jest?’ ejaculated Soranis. Was it possible that a scion of a reigning house could speak thus of his august relatives?

Othyris rose with that sterner and colder look upon his face which men feared in the rare moments that it came there.

‘Your Excellency will pardon me if I deprive myself of the pleasure of your presence. But in this matter there is not a moment to be lost. Beg Kantakuzene to come here by the garden gates at the north side of this house as long before my father’s return as possible.’

Soranis felt dominated and cowed; he was not brave, either morally or physically; and although he had no doubt that there was some lesion in the brain of this headstrong prince, yet that conviction only made him the more anxious to escape from the presence of Othyris. He took a formal and a humble leave, and went, taking the garden-key with him; a sad and mortified man, conscious that he might have gone on smoothly and pleasantly through various sessions, trotting round the ring in the circus of office, if Platon Illyris had died, as he should in the course of nature have died, some thirty or forty years earlier on some foreign strand of exile. The great Theodoric, the contemporary of Illyris, had died of a surfeit of oysters and red burgundy when only fifty years of age.

Providence takes so little account of men’s appetites and digestions! It does not, indeed, seem



even to have ever reckoned with them as what they are, the chief factors in the disposal of human affairs.

In the course of an hour the garden pass-key was duly conveyed to the deputy for Concordia, who came to the postern gate of the gardens of Othyris, entered the gardens unseen, and took his way, with strict care for secrecy, to the private apartments of the King's second son. Kantakuzene felt considerable curiosity as to the reason for his unofficial summons. He attributed it, however, to the events of the day, which he had himself followed with keen interest and considerable apprehension; knowing well that it is easier to excite a crowd than it is to control it, to set a ball rolling down a slope than to stop it.

Even as he was ushered into the presence of Othyris, he heard the people gathered in the Square of the Dioscuri calling on the name of Elim, and making that shrill clamour which in Helianthus does service both as felicitation and as menace, as a shout of homage and a threat of vengeance.

Kantakuzene was carefully on his guard before this unexpected summons. He did not conceal his mingled admiration and disapprobation of what had taken place at Aquilegia; it had perhaps saved the city from riot, but it had created a most difficult position for the government and the monarch.

Kantakuzene did not lack courage, and when he thought that it was necessary to speak the truth he did so. When he found that Othyris desired him to go to the King, he said frankly :—

‘It would be impossible, sir. Nor would His Majesty receive me in such a capacity. He could

not possibly do so. You seem to forget that I am the leader of the Opposition.'

'You cannot approach him unless you are summoned?'

'I cannot, of course, sir.'

'Not to save the city from bloodshed?'

'Such a breach of etiquette would save nothing, sir.'

Othyrus was silent. He saw that Kantakuzene was right.

'What is to be done, then?' he asked. 'My promise must be kept in twenty-four hours. Half that time has already passed. I would write to the King, but he would not read any letter from me.'

'Why, sir, did you take so brief a period?'

'The people were unwilling even to give me so much as that. They desired to obtain the body of Illyris then and there, and carry it down into the city and up to the Pantheon. You must know what would have taken place if they had done so.'

'But you, sir, would not have been responsible. The responsibility lay with those in power, whose duty it was to preserve order.'

'And how is order always preserved? Round the coffin of the man who gained a kingdom for my race, the blood of his fellow-people would have run like water, unarmed crowds would have been cut down like grass.'

'The guilt, sir, would not have been yours.'

'Thirty years ago, would you not have done as I did?'

'Perhaps, sir. Youth is rash.'

'And age and success are selfish.'

'I admire the nobility of your action, sir; but

meanwhile the position you have created is most strained, most dangerous. Do you believe that His Majesty, your father, will allow the people to take Illyris to the Pantheon?’

‘No ; I do not.’

‘Then you are prepared to throw your life away to produce no result?’

‘I shall certainly keep my word in one manner or the other to the people of Helios.’

Kantakuzene was silent.

‘My father fears revolution,’ added Othyris. ‘But he unfortunately believes in the superior strength of repression.’

Kantakuzene thought, what he could not say, that the death of his second son would be more welcome than his life to the ruler of Helianthus.

‘Was it necessary, sir, to give such a pledge, to go to such extremes?’ he said. ‘Could you not have persuaded the people to disperse and return to their homes?’

‘No, I could not have done so,’ replied Elim. ‘Nor did I seek to do so. They gave a tardy remembrance to the greatest man the country has ever owned, and their conscience led them aright. What ! A public burial with national honours to Domitian Corvus and the hero of Argileion and of Samaris shoved under the earth in a graveyard of the poor ! The instinct of the people was entirely right.’

Kantakuzene was silent.

He could not deny ; he dared not agree. Morally, Othyris had every argument on his side ; in practical politics he was hopelessly wrong. He had encouraged the populace to coerce the Crown.

To Kantakuzene, who had been Prime Minister

before, and intended to be so again, the offence seemed very great. He admired it ; he understood it ; his sympathies were even aroused by it ; but he condemned it. In a mere demagogue it might have been praised ; but in a son of the King it was a grave offence.

Honour is a fine steed on which to excite the plaudits of a crowd ; but Honour generally meets with rough and stony roads and has poison put in his drinking-water.

Kantakuzene knew that a sharp and short repression by troops of the crowds would have been less dangerous to the peace and polity of the country than was the encouragement to rebellion given by this alliance with the people of the King's second son.

'You were with the people in the days of your youth, I am aware,' said Elim. 'Even now it is the people whom you represent, and in whose cause your eloquence is often heard. It is for the sake of the people, not for mine, that you must urge my father to accede to their just desire. If he refuse, there will be civil war in the streets in Helianthus.'

'No doubt,' thought Kantakuzene, as he remained silent ; 'and if you have tenacity of purpose, and audacity and resolve and egotism enough, it is quite possible that you may make Helianthus a republic and yourself its head.'

'You must warn my father,' said Othyris, 'no one else will do so.'

'If His Majesty summon me, I will do my best to convince him of the danger of insurrection,' replied Kantakuzene. 'If he do not, it will be impossible for me to go to the Soleia.'

'That is understood,' said Othyris. 'In that

event there will be bloodshed. Nothing will avert it.' And he rose and gave his hand to Kantakuzene.

He was tired and anxious to be alone.

Kantakuzene returned to his own residence, which was close by ; the throngs in the Square of the Dioscuri were still calling on the name of Elim. Kantakuzene was of a temperament which is happiest in perilous events, in difficult crises, in the excitement and the responsibility of complicated intrigues and obligations ; he was constitutionally courageous, he loved to wrestle with men and throw them. Usually, he did throw them ; and he had seldom had a fall himself.

But his present mission was an anxiety, even a terror to him ; he did not see his way clearly. Such a mission as Othyris had given him was wholly out of order, and to advise the King to open the gates of the House of the Immortals to Platon Illyris seemed to him a task of which the issue might very probably be to close on himself the gates of public life for ever and aye. He was relieved when he heard at his own house that the King had not returned from Rodonthe. The respite gave him time to reflect and to prepare for any event.

He was aware that as a Radical leader he could not himself accept office if he were forced to oppose the desire of the people. Yet, even to him, the entrance of the bier of Illyris into the burial-place of the Immortals appeared an offence to the reigning House which it would be impossible for the head of that House to condone.

'If only the people will trust me and be patient !' thought Othyris.

When the evening papers announced that Soranis

was about to resign, there was great agitation in all political spheres of action. It was unexpected. It alarmed all capitalists and speculators. To many it was unintelligible. Men were half the night in the streets. The cafés and restaurants buzzed like hives when the bees are swarming. The troops were, of course, kept confined to their barracks. Throngs of people stood through the short hours of the summer night in the Square of the Dioscuri before the palace of Othyris. But he made them no response to their enthusiasm, and neither came into the Square nor on to the balcony; they shouted till they were hoarse, but always in vain.

It was past midnight when the carriages of the royal sportsmen rolled with noise and dust over the marble pavements of the streets and crashed into the great court of the Soleia, followed by the carriages of the gentlemen who had accompanied the expedition, and by the brakes bearing the bleeding carcasses of the grand beasts, stags, does, elands, wild boars, slaughtered for the princely pastime in the close season and in the breeding time.

The King, fatigued and drowsy, had only one desire, his bed. The heaviness of sleep and stupor made the news which awaited him appear the more intolerable, and he muttered in his throat oaths which chilled the blood of his gentlemen of the chamber. But he refused audience to any one; he left all action to the morning light; he threw himself on the narrow mattress of his camp bed, and dropped at once into a deep slumber in which both his body and his brain were stupefied by carnage, by brandy, by fatigue; no one dared disturb his august repose.

Beneath him, stretched on stone floors in the

palace cellars, the grand forest creatures he had slain still dropped blood from their innocent mouths.

His son Elim did not sleep. He passed the chief part of the night revising the various manners in which he had already bequeathed his properties and provided for the consequences of his own death, for he was fully resolved not to live a day if, as he knew was probable, his promise to the people should not be carried out by the State.

His country should know, at least, that he had been no traitor. It was a point of honour to him, as it is to the man who has drawn the fatal lot which imposes suicide upon him; and, considering the refusal as inevitable, he prepared for it. Soranis and even Kantakuzene were more agitated than he. He was as calm as the Duc d'Enghien was on that fatal morning, when the young Bourbon's chief anxiety was for the future of his dog. In the small hours of the morning messages came to Othyris that the King had returned, and that he had gone to his rest without receiving any Minister or even the Prefect of the Palace. No one dared arouse him.

'It is certain, I imagine, that he will refuse,' thought his son.

Othyris could not in honour have done any other thing than that which he had done. Yet in his own sight he seemed to have failed in his duty towards those who could not help themselves and whom he had bidden return to gods that he knew to be false. Men would praise him perhaps, praise his filial loyalty and his rejection of personal popularity; but though he knew he could not have done otherwise with self respect, yet he felt himself that he had failed, where one less scrupulous and more selfish

might have taken fortune at the flood. Are there not moments in life when a lesser crime should be done to avoid a greater crime? Is there not many an instance, in the records of history, of evil having been boldly done, that good should come out from it?

It seemed to him impossible that any man living should bend the will of the King. Illyris, in the opinion of the King, was a republican who had been a rebel; the populace was a hydra-headed monster; the popular will was an insolence, a treason, a fever as contagious and dangerous as the plague, and to be stamped out like the rinderpest.

The dead and the living were to the ruler of Helianthus alike unpardonable, insupportable.

Othyris had given his word to the people in order to avoid a popular outbreak, a beginning of revolution which might be fraught with consequences incalculable; but as his word could only be kept if his father gave him the power to keep it, he had no hope that he should be able to do so.

There was only one way in which he could prove his sincerity to the people if he were denied the power to give them their will.

Death alone could speak for him in clear and certain tones. The people would not misjudge his motives, nor would the woman whom he loved.



## CHAPTER XXIII

THE King rose late the next morning : his temper, always bad, was that of a fasting tiger ; it was not improved by the news which awaited him, or by the black coffee and cognac with which he broke his fast. His olive skin grew duskier, his sullen eyes colder and more obscured ; he was enraged with others for that delay in the conveyance of the intelligence to him which had been entirely due to his own fault in refusing to hear anything whatever. He cursed every one : the governor of the city, the commandant of the troops, the chief of the police, the central government, his Ministers, his household, and, of course, his second son beyond all others.

‘That I should have bred an anarchist !’ he thought, in fury ; and he cursed his dead wife in her grave.

The action of the populace was to him as unpardonable as a kick from the wheeler, or a jib from the leaders, is to the driver of a four-in-hand. His Ministers assured him that the present effervescence was as harmless as the froth of seltzer ; but he had once seen a seltzer syphon explode.

Meanwhile the crowds increased with every ten minutes, and were fed by numbers of peasants from the outlying country, come in with the produce of

their ground, who remained to see what might happen.

The Crown Prince was sent for by the King ; to him, as to his father, the whole events of the previous day appeared diabolical ; and neither of them could understand why the crowd had not been dispersed with bayonets or by an infantry volley. It was such a simple thing to do. What use was the governor of the city if he could not do it ? As for Elim, they knew well that he was a second Egalité. Nothing that he could do surprised either of them.

To calm these furious waters, to moderate these raging cyclones, seemed to Michael Soranis, when ushered into their presence, a task wholly beyond his strength. John of Gunderöde, in a suit of shepherd's plaid tweed, with a red cashmere neckerchief wound about his throat—for he was hoarse from a chill taken in the woods whilst standing still awaiting the driven deer—was not Jupiter Tonans, nor even Louis Quatorze ; and his son Theo was not the Black Prince, or Don John of Austria, but a red-faced, bullet-headed, angry, alarmed person, twisting bristling moustaches and breathing fiercely like a chained-up bull-dog. Yet such as they were, they carried fear and awe into the breast of the Prime Minister, who was not a Sully, a Bismarck, a Ricasoli, or a Richelieu, but a plausible and pliant opportunist who disliked absolutism and revolution equally, and was absolutely incapable of speaking unwelcome truths to his sovereign. A Minister ought not to be a courtier ; but, unfortunately, the two words are too often synonymous.

Morally the spine of Soranis grew more supple, as physically it grew more rheumatic. Reactionism

increases in an ageing statesman as crust on the ageing bottle of port wine. The loaves and fishes, which to his youth used to seem indifferent, become more indispensable to him as time goes on; and their abundance on his own table appears to him the correct measure of national prosperity, because it is the measure of his own personal success.

To Soranis, therefore, it was in all sincerity the most painful of missions to stand before these two angry gentlemen, and endeavour to pour the oil of deprecation on the raging waters of their wrath. He knew that he was only partially trusted by them; he knew that they always saw in him a half-hearted conservative and monarchist, a person of doubtful and debateable principles; they always remembered against him the years during which, as a doctor from the provinces, he had sat on the left benches. How persuade such hearers that the wish of the populace must be respected, without appearing to be still the tribune of the people? How excuse and uphold the action of the King's insubordinate son, without seeming to be the apologist of an anarchist, the partisan of a rebel? His naturally timid temper and his failing health rendered him incapable of such a dual task as the pacification of a furious monarch and of an excited populace. He left power with sore distress; he knew that at his age he could never return to it. When in office Corvus had, indeed, been much older than he himself now was; but Corvus had been made of brass and steel. Soranis was of far more fragile stuff. With intense pain and mortification he felt that he had nothing to do except to place his resignation in his sovereign's hands; and the King, without any amenity of speech

or manner, accepted it with a few unkind incisive words.

The aged statesman was bloodless, exhausted, out of breath, when he passed out of the Soleia.

‘Sir,’ he said feebly to Othyris, a few minutes later, ‘I found myself unable to recommend to His Majesty the ratification of your Royal Highness’s promise to the people of Helios. I could not reconcile it with my public duty nor with my private powers ; I have therefore placed my resignation in His Majesty’s hands, as I had the honour to inform you that I should do. I have advised him to summon His Excellency Demetrius Kantakuzene.’

‘You have done well,’ said Othyris, ‘but do you believe that the King will send for Kantakuzene?’

‘His Majesty always acts constitutionally, sir.’

‘In form, perhaps, he does,’ thought Othyris, ‘but in spirit not often.’

‘Sir,’ said Soranis, greatly woebegone, ‘your royal father has upbraided me for the actual course of events. He used expressions which I felt were unjust, for I have always done what I believed to be my duty.’

‘I am sure that your Excellency has always acted for what you considered the interests of the country,’ replied Othyris ; and he felt that he did the fallen Minister no more than justice. For Soranis was one of those public men who are neither hypocrites nor liars, but who deceive themselves into the belief that they serve their nation when they only serve themselves.

Soranis had, like many another successful politician, believed that his own measures were wholesome medicine for the maladies of the State ; that his own

ascendancy was the best of all paregorics, and his own administration at once a purge, a tonic, and an anodyne.

Humbly, wearily, almost tearfully, the ex-Premier took his leave; and Othyris, left alone, thought: 'Kantakuzene if he be called will fail.'

To account for the sudden fall of Soranis it was reported in the official Press that he had suffered from a slight attack of cerebral paralysis. But no one believed it. Every one felt sure that the paralysis from which he suffered was the inability of a feeble politician to cope with an unexpected situation.

Early in the forenoon it was rumoured that the resignation of Soranis had been accepted, and that it was expected that the King would send for the leader of the Opposition. The news of the resignation, and the hope that Kantakuzene would be called to office, tended to soothe and pacify the people in the streets, and they waited without agitation and impatience for further intelligence.

They believed in Kantakuzene. He had stepped past them, and shut the doors of reform in their faces many a time, but he remained nevertheless their ideal reformer.

The courage of Kantakuzene was usually stimulated by difficulty, but the task now before him seemed to him greater than any man born of woman could bring to a successful issue. But he accepted the position, and brought to it all his acumen, finesse, and knowledge of men. That he should be summoned when the streets of Helios were full of agitated and excited people flattered his self-esteem and at the same time moved his patriotism, which had never been an artificial or insincere sentiment, and armed

him at all points against the wrath of his sovereign. Kantakuzene was neither false nor dishonest ; but his views, like those of most men who succeed, changed with his fortunes. It is natural that the man who has arrived at a political altitude should not think ill of a world which has allowed and assisted him to arrive. The sentiments of a successful man change imperceptibly with his success, but not necessarily insincerely. To the young lawyer, holding a brief for an insurgent, revolution seems a very different matter to that which it appears to him when he is a statesman who can consign troops to barracks or send them out with fixed bayonets to clear the streets. There is as much difference between the two stages of the same man's life as there was between a goat-herd on the slopes of Olympus and the Olympian Zeus throned upon the clouds.

All the wisdom of Socrates only brought him the cup of hemlock. Successful men know that ; hence, so gradually that they are unconscious of the transformation, they become hard, cold, gluttonous, cynical, mercenary ; their price is a very high one, but they have a price. Their ideals lie dead, as dead as the wild-flowers which they gathered in their childhood and threw down on the grass of paths which their feet will never tread again. But Kantakuzene did now and then look at the field-flowers, even as Disraeli did at the primroses. He was not absolutely disloyal to his early tenets ; but he, like Disraeli, let them lie in abeyance.

Like most men who are not fanatics or visionaries he cared principally for his own interests ; but after his own—a long way after—he did care for the interests of his country.

He knew that these were imperilled by the policy of the King and of the reactionary party which over-weighted a poor nation with fiscal burdens, sacrificed all useful progress to military expenditure, and was the dupe of showy and useless alliances, which kept the tired people armed to the teeth and bowed down under the pack-saddle of a monstrous taxation. Office was naturally his goal for his own personal ambitions, but in addition to these for his sense that he understood the people better than his rivals, and could benefit them more.

When he received the summons of his sovereign he felt not only the elation of a politician flattered by being called to serve the Crown in a difficult crisis, but something also of the patriotism which is ready to confront a dangerous issue for sake of the country. The moment was critical. He knew that if the people became more excited and were refused the demand for the burial of Illyris in the city, their rage would become ungovernable, and, though they would be probably worsted eventually, they were certainly in the mood to face the troops; and it was possible that the troops might go over to the popular side. Kantakuzene knew that there was much secret disaffection in the barracks of Helios. If Othyris should cease to be neutral, and should come out into the streets and take their head, it was probable, thought the statesman, that there would be civil war of the most bitter kind—of the populace against the ruling power.

To avert this seemed to Kantakuzene his own supreme duty. The time had been when he would have welcomed such a conflict, and have done his best to conclude it in favour of the populace. But

that time was past ; he had been Prime Minister before now ; he desired to be so again. To risk, instead, revolution beside a young man who was a poet rather than a politician, whose scruples were as many as the sands of the sea, and whose courage was constantly being checked by the hesitations of his conscience, never entered the mind of the deputy for Concordia.

There are transmigrations which are against nature. The revolutionist may develop into the Minister. The Minister never becomes again the revolutionist. So Kantakuzene, on receiving the summons from the King, hastened to the Soleia.

Kantakuzene was by instinct and early training a special pleader : he had been in early years remarked for the skill, the suavity, the courtesy, the persuasiveness of his speeches in the courts of justice. He had brought into political life that shrewd and subtle management of men which he had learned at the Bar.

A bourgeois, a notary's son, a self-made man, there was a certain awe even for him in princes, a certain spell which magnetised him momentarily ; but he was never *ventre à terre* before royalty, like Deliornis or Soranis ; and when his momentary trepidation passed off, which it did soon, he was master of himself, and at times, as he was now, master of them.

He had not been a famous advocate without knowing how to move his fellow-men by the mere charm and force of words. The King and the Crown Prince were indeed not susceptible to eloquence, but his adroit speech reached to the hidden sources of their secret fears, and conjured up before their dull



minds that vision of the Red Spectre which haunts at night the pillows whereon crowned heads uneasy lie.

The populace was to them both but as a worm on which to set their heel ; but Kantakuzene made them reluctantly realise that the worm might turn into a viper, nay, even into a python ; and that the heel even of Achilles was vulnerable in the modern successors of Achilles. They were both clothed in the impenetrable armour of pride, or prejudice, of vanity, of caste, of ignorance ; but the shafts of his ingenious and deferential words pierced the joints of their armour, and made the net-work of nerves beneath the armour thrill.

In the Alps, at certain seasons, a single shot fired may bring down an avalanche which may bury villages. Kantakuzene used the metaphor, and made them feel that the season was come, the avalanche above their heads, the atmosphere surcharged with danger of no common kind.

The heir to the throne would have dared all, would have fired the shot, though the avalanche had engulfed him ; but the actual occupant of the throne was more moved by the impending danger : under his stolid and cold mask he was afraid of what might happen—he did not wish to go and live on his millions in a foreign country like a retired stock-broker ; he knew well that the man who has reigned is on ceasing to reign dwarfed and crippled for the rest of his natural life.

He did not believe in the possibility of his own deposition, his own exile ; but he could not altogether resist the impression of the alarm which Kantakuzene so skilfully suggested without ever giving it a shape

which could offend. A vision rose before him of his son Elim chosen as President of a Helianthine Republic, even as Henri d'Orleans, had he had more spirit for combat or less loyalty to his family, might have become president of his nation and master of her fate.

Willingly, and with fierce pleasure in his slow veins, would the King have arrested his son, have called out the troops, have raked the streets with musketry fire, and blocked the squares with cannon ; but the serum of fear was infiltrated into his veins by an accomplished adept in mental therapeutics ; and Kantakuzene, with his flute-like voice and persuasive speech, was, momentarily at least, his master. Jealousy and fear, two doubtful counsellors, made the King estimate the popularity of his second son as a far more potent factor than it actually was. He attributed to Elim projects and ambitions which Elim had never harboured, and which were indeed wholly alien to his temperament. A mind which sees every side of each question, which is doubtful of the wisdom of any step, which is divided between emotions and opinions, between censure and sympathy, is not a mind to conceive and execute hardy and daring schemes of self-aggrandisement : such a mind, as it shrinks from decision, is untempted by lust of power, since in all power all action must be swift, sharp, unhesitating, and certain of itself.

Othyris would have been fully as reluctant to head a republic as he would have been unwilling to reign ; he abhorred responsibility, and had no belief in his own wisdom to sustain him under it. This is not the temperament of ambitious agitators. But the King had never had either the inclination or capacity

to study and understand his son's character, and to his narrow and angular intelligence the intricacies and scruples of such a character were not even conceivable; he only saw in the nation's favourite a rebel in public life and a rival in private life. The King was afraid; he was in the power of a son whom he had threatened, ridiculed, coerced, hated ever since the day that he had shot the eagle to wound the tender heart of a child. He was afraid—afraid of exposure, of scandal, of losing before the sight of men that reputation of cleanliness and of chastity which he had maintained so carefully throughout his life.

Kantakuzene attributed the evident irresolution, which had succeeded the dogged obstinacy and impenetrability of the King's attitude, to that dread of the Red Spectre of which Othyris had spoken; a spectre which haunts the sleep and dominates the waking thoughts of all potentates. 'He is afraid,' he thought. 'Will he yield to fear?'

Kantakuzene was not a vain man; his self-esteem never obscured his judgment; therefore he did not attribute to his own persuasion the gradual change which he perceived come over the King's countenance and attitude. John of Gunderöde rose out of his chair and paced the carpet with steps which indicated an uneasy mind; his sullen features had on them a transient expression of anxiety; he smoked feverishly, throwing aside his cigarettes scarcely consumed; his hands were thrust into his trousers pockets, his eyes were veiled under their heavy lids. The Crown Prince looked at him furtively in astonishment, not daring to speak.

Kantakuzene thought, 'Is it possible that he is wavering? Is it possible that he is afraid?' There

were hesitation and indecision indicated in the movements of the monarch.

Precisely as the chimes and clocks of the city sounded the second hour of the day, Demetrius Kantakuzene was ushered into the presence of Othyris. Othyris laid down the volume he read, and the cigarette he smoked; he was tranquil; he seemed even indifferent

‘Your Excellency is punctual. Has the struggle been hard?’

He saw that it had been hard. The countenance of the Minister was worn, pallid, harassed, drawn.

His voice was almost inaudible, and his breath was drawn in quick gasps as he answered :

‘I have had the honour, sir, to be ordered to convey to the public the news that His Majesty the King graciously consents to honour the body of Platon Illyris with sepulture in the Pantheon, called by the populace the “House of the Immortals.”’

‘I congratulate you,’ he said to Kantakuzene. ‘You have won a bloodless victory where defeat would have cost much bloodshed.’

‘Sir,’ said Kantakuzene, ‘thank God that your life is not to be thrown away in its youth. Your motives would never have been understood or your sacrifices appreciated.’

‘That would not have mattered,’ replied Othyris. ‘What would have mattered is that there would have been civil war in Helios.’

Kantakuzene sighed, as an overstrained horse sighs when reaching the summit of a hill of stones, its sinews swollen and its lungs choked, resting without rest.

He had won this battle in the privacy of the King's closet; but all the other battles with party, with opposition, with colleagues, with supporters, with the Senate and the Press, with the committees and the constituencies, were all yet to be fought. To Othyris the matter seemed at an end; but to the politician the endless coil of difficulties appeared as yet scarcely touched, and although he was victorious, he thought, like Wellington, that victory was the next saddest thing to a defeat.

‘What made him yield?’ asked Othyris.

‘I cannot tell, sir.’

Kantakuzene was too adroit to couple fear with the royal name. Othyris thought it was dread of the Red Spectre; he never supposed that it was dread of himself. The motive, however, did not matter; what was of import was that the desire of the people was granted. He scarcely gave a thought to the fact that his own life had been spared.

Kantakuzene, though only Prime Minister-elect, had acted with promptitude and temerity. He had given orders that, so long as the multitudes remained only harmlessly excited, they should not be molested, but that upon the slightest sign of disturbance or menace the repression should be severe. The people, however, gave no excuse for such severity. They were gratified, grateful, orderly, though effervescent and emotional, and crowded together in the streets chanting with tears and smiles their national songs, and shouting that for once unchastised Hymn of Eos, which had roused their fathers' fathers in dungeon and cell, on the benches of galleys, and by the cold hearths of rural cabins.

By the unconscious obedience to that magnetic current which moves a crowd, the bulk of the people had come towards and into the square in which the residence of Othyris was situated, and were shouting his name before its long and imposing frontage of pale fawn-coloured marble.

His gentlemen, sorely disquieted, conversed together in troubled tones. Othyris was alone in his studio, where no one of them ever dared to follow him except by his command. Through the long perspective of rooms which opened one out of another, they could see the lights glittering in the Square, and the sound of the people's outcries echoed to them through the open windows of the last salon. Would the crowd disperse quietly, they wondered, if no answer were vouchsafed to it? The gates stood wide open, as usual; the porter with his gilded stick, and the two sentries, the only guardians of the building, would be easily overpowered if the mob should become angry; within the palace there was a crowd of servants, but these would be of no use for defence. The courtiers grew nervous as the cries of the citizens became more insistent.

Like the Scots of old they agreed that some one should bell the cat, should enter their master's *atelier*, and give the alarm; but no one of them cared to accept that office. Every few minutes one or other of them walked through the rooms and looked from behind the draperies of one of the windows on to the piazza below. In the centre of it was the vast fountain, a work of the sixteenth century, placed between the statues of the Dioscuri; dolphins and sea-horses plunging; adolescents astride on them, laughing; towering columns of water shooting

upwards, turning in the air, falling downwards in torrents of foam. In the electric light directed on it, its marbles and its waters were one mass of silver. Around it, and filling the whole square, were the many-coloured and motley representatives of the various arts, and crafts, and labours, and degrees of industry and poverty which made up the democracy of Helios. They entirely filled the great space ; on two sides were palaces used for public offices ; at the opposite end to that of Othyris there were public gardens with dense tall trees and palms of untold age. The populace made that hoarse ominous sound, like that of a sullen sea, which is its habitual note both in joy and in rage. But ever and again above the clamour there rose a clearer call : it was the call on the name of Elim by the people who loved him.

The gentlemen, who one by one gazed down on the spectacle from behind the curtains, were alarmed and impressed ; the numbers of the crowd increased with every moment as new-comers poured in through the various streets which led to it.

The cries grew more turbulent, the press more feverish ; the chanting of the Hymn of Eos was crossed by the refrain of the Gallian hymn of revolution and the translated strophes of northern odes to Labour and to Anarchy. They were in that mood when, if the will and the power to direct them be there, such throngs can be led to any excesses, to any crimes, through a sea of blood.

The courtiers consulted together ; Othyris must be told, they again agreed, but by whom ?

‘He must hear them in his studio,’ said one of the gentlemen. ‘If he choose to come out to them he will do so.’

In their own thoughts they all blamed him deeply for his encouragement of the demands of the people, who, in their estimation, were but the mere tools of the socialists.

As they whispered together, and the shouts of the throngs echoed through the great, silent, lighted suite of apartments, the door which opened into the corridor leading to his study was pushed back, and Othyris himself came towards them. They were surprised to see how pale and agitated his countenance was, for they knew that the traditional courage of the royal House was in no member of it greater than in himself. But with a firm step he passed by them, saluted them by a courteous gesture, and went through the rooms to those end windows which looked on the piazza.

The windows opened on to a large balcony. He passed out on to it, and stood looking down upon the populace. He was recognised at once, and greeted with the passionate warmth of a southern people. He waited a little while for the first vehemence of their welcome to spend itself, then he advanced to the marble balustrade and held up his hand. In the comparative silence which ensued his voice reached clear and unwavering to the strained ears of the expectant throngs. He could have done with them in that moment whatever he had chosen.

‘My friends,’ he said to them, ‘I thank you for your kindness, but no honour is due to me ; I myself was powerless. Take your gratitude whither it is due : to one who, possessing the power, had also the will to do that which you wished—our sovereign lord the King.’

It was loyalty, it was filial duty, it was the fealty



of a gentleman to his race ; but it was not what the people desired or expected. An angry murmur rose from their restless ranks.

‘I have no other bidding for you, my friends. If you believe that you owe me anything, obey me now,’ he said, and stood still a moment to see what effect his words had on them. He felt as if he betrayed them. He felt untrue to his own faiths, and to their faith in him. But what other course was open to him ? He could not lead them to the siege of the Soleia.

A brawny giant from the docks, naked to the waist, with a red cap on his black poll, shouted back to him :

‘To hell with John of Gunderöde ! It is you we want !’

‘You ! You ! You ! We want you !’ the whole multitude echoed as with one voice. But already Othyris had gone back into the room, and they saw him no more ; nor did he return to the balcony, though with impassioned entreaties and imprecations they implored him to come out to them once more.

Two agents of police, supple and strong as pythons, had glided through the closely-pressed ranks and seized the man of the docks and dragged him away out of sight, with an action so rapid and noiseless that the people scarcely realised what had been done, and had neither time nor chance for rescue.

When Kantakuzene congratulated him with warmth and gratitude on his answer to the populace, Othyris received his compliments with great coldness.

‘Surely I could have done nothing else ?’ he said

with curt disdain. 'You would not have had me lead them to the siege of the Arsenal or the sack of the Soleia?'

The Minister thought, but did not say, that it was precisely these things which many would have expected from a prince in open antagonism with the Crown.

He himself was not a little astonished at the inertia, as he considered it, of a young man who was avowedly a malcontent, and, as all knew, on ill terms with his royal father.

'He has had his opportunity,' he thought, 'and he has thrown it away; it will not come back again. Blood would have run like water, of course; but it is just possible that if he had put himself at the head of the people he might have made himself master of the city and the throne. The King grows more unpopular every year, and the army is mined by socialism. We could not be perfectly sure of its obedience in any serious conflict with the populace.'

And Kantakuzene, who had a pleasant sense of humour, laughed a little to himself as he imagined his august master, as he might have seen him, hurrying out in travelling-cap and mackintosh, by a side door of the palace, in the grey of dawn or in the dead of night, and getting on board a steamship to go where his millions were safely awaiting him over the seas. The Crown Prince, he thought, would have stayed and would have fought like a bull-terrier to the end in such an event.

As it was, the demonstration ended harmlessly; on the morrow the people returned peaceably to their work. They were only partly satisfied, but reckoned that half a loaf was better than no bread, and to have

had their will in one thing argued well to them for the future.

The person who gained most by the events was the person to whom they had seemed most threatening. Kantakuzene became once more as popular with the masses as he had always been in the days of his early manhood. To his influence the people attributed their victory, and to his influence the bourgeoisie attributed the peaceful issue of a dangerous movement. Only the King and the Crown Prince, who had always disliked, now hated him ; he had forced royalty into concessions to the popular will.

The authorities were still in great alarm. The troops were still confined to barracks. The number of guards in plain clothes with revolvers hidden was very large. But the elaborate military precautions taken were in a great measure concealed, and that portion of the people which had been concerned in the demonstration of the previous days was too elated to be alarmed or to take umbrage at such precautions against itself as it perceived. They were proud of their own victory, with that thoughtless, inflated, dangerous conceit which in all ages and in all climes throws the *plebs* into the arms of its antagonists at the critical moments when calmness and self-restraint might give it a chance of victory.

## CHAPTER XXIV

THE homage of the public to Platon Illyris on the morrow was without pomp, or parade, or military spectacle, but its simplicity made its grandeur, and the crowds which followed the bier from the hillside and the seashore across the city to the mausoleum were worthy of his memory. There was no music, there were no troops, there were no cannon, no priests, no banners, no muffled drums, no war-horses slowly pacing under plumed riders and brodered saddle-cloths : there were only the people of Helios, in thousands and tens of thousands, following the plain deal coffin in dead silence, for the Hymn of Eos had been again forbidden by special proclamation, and the people would have no other.

From far and near, from maritime village and mountain hamlet, the men and women of Helianthus flocked in masses through the gates, and swelled the populace of the various quarters of the town ; a torrent of multicoloured hues, of silent but impassioned life, choking down in silence in their throats the forbidden chant which rose to the lips of all.

The troops were shut up in their barracks ready for any emergency ; strong forces of guards, and police, and mounted carabineers, were drawn up along the line of route ; the gates and the windows of the

palaces of the aristocracy and the plutocracy were all closed, but in no sign of respect, only out of a great fear.

As the funeral passed through the Square of the Dioscuri under the lofty palms, by the falling fountains, Othyris rode out of the courtyard of his palace and placed himself beside the bier ; he was in full uniform ; he wore crape upon his arm ; the sun shone on the fairness of his face and hair.

An immense shout of welcome and applause greeted the courage of his act.

He checked the tumultuous cheering with a gesture, entreating and commanding silence ; then rode on beside the coffin at a slow pace, the smothered outcries of homage and admiration rolling down the air like the hoarse mutterings of a storm. The solemnity of the errand on which they went, the impression of awe and repentance which was on the souls of the masses that day alone restrained the populace of Helios from proclaiming their will to have him as their lord, to be ruled by him and by him alone.

The palace of Kantakuzene was but a few dozen yards distant from the Square of the Dioscuri. The dense crowds passed under its walls. From a casement, hidden by growing plants climbing over its grating, Kantakuzene looked out on the throng and saw the solitary rider on the black horse.

‘ Good heavens, what imprudence ! ’ he murmured. ‘ If I had dreamed of it, I would have kept him in by force ! ’

In his horror and apprehension the sweat of fear and of amaze stood in chill drops upon his forehead. Never, he knew, never would John of Gunderöde pardon either Elim or himself.

The bier and the rider beside it passed out of sight down the street, soon hidden by the projecting balconies, and sculptures, and lamp-irons of its ancient houses. The crowds continued long to tramp through the street, until the last stragglers had passed. There is no sound so ominous as the passing of a multitude. As he heard it, Kantakuzene bowed his head on his hands and sighed wearily. This demonstration might close peacefully, or it might end in bloodshed; but whatever might be its issue he knew that the germs of a great peril were in it. All the citizens of Helios seemed to be massed along the route of the funeral procession, and the whole working population of the city was abroad; at the windows of their dwellings only the aged and the very young, left at home, looked out in impatient enthusiasm; the white marble dust rose in the air in dense clouds, the tread of the many thousands of feet was like the marching of an army. From the Gate of Olives to the opposite hill on which the mausoleum stood was a distance of three miles and more; there was not a foot of it which was not occupied. Such movements have, as a rule, but little worth; populous cities send forth their masses to welcome a despot, to cheer a general, to gape at a bridegroom, to applaud the legions who return from an unjust war. But these multitudes were repentant; they were as sons who mourned a father they had long neglected; there were spontaneity, sincerity, remorse, in their souls, and their hearts beat in the unison of a passionate, if an evanescent, adoration of a dead god.

It was towards the close of the warm and fragrant afternoon that Ilia Illyris sat beside the stone well

amongst the columbines and roses wondering how the day had gone ; whether peace or strife had been the escort of the plain pinewood coffin which had been borne away from Aquilegia at daybreak by the people of Helios. Janos had not returned.

She looked up as she heard a step on the dry grass of the path which led up to her house and she saw Othyrus.

He had changed his clothes in the city, and had come thither as soon as he had been able to free himself from the enthusiasm of the crowds, when the bronze gates of the House of the Immortals had closed again, after having opened to receive the coffin of Illyris.

He stood in the shadows of the boughs at a little distance from her ; his head was uncovered, he looked pale and tired, for he had eaten nothing all day ; his ears were deaf with the noise of the crowds, his eyes were hot and dry with the dust of the streets ; but he was proud of the tidings which he brought her, glad that he could prove to her his own sincerity and good faith.

‘All has passed well and with order,’ he said to her. ‘I went with the people to the mausoleum. He lies with the great men of Helianthus ; the greatest of them all.’

His voice was low and broken from fatigue and from emotion.

She rose and went towards him in the warm amber light of the late sunset with a sweet and gracious look upon her face, and she put out her hand to him with a gesture of which queens might have envied the dignity and the grace.

‘I thank you, sir,’ she said, in a softer tone than

he had ever heard from her. 'I did you injustice ; I ask your pardon.'

Othyris bowed very low and touched her hand timidly with his lips as though she were his suzerain and he a vassal. He did not speak. All words appeared to him too poor, too trivial.

'I thank you, sir,' she said again. 'You have done a noble action.'

She sat down again on the old marble seat against the wall of the house as he remained standing ; his emotion was great, and he was afraid lest by a word too warm, a glance too ardent, he might scare away, like a frightened bird, her first movement of confidence and sympathy.

'You know the English poet's line,' she said : ' "*After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.*" That Platon Illyris sleeps well, in honoured sepulchre, and in sight of the people, is due to you, to you alone. I thank you ; I thank you infinitely.'

'The Pantheon was his right. The instinct of the people told them that.'

'Yes ; but they could have had no power to impose their will upon the Crown had it not been for you.'

He could not contradict what was obvious.

'I hope it has not caused dissension between you and your father ?'

'There is seldom anything else between the King and myself.'

'Who induced the King to yield ?'

'Kantakuzene.'

'Kantakuzene ! A renegade ! A turn-coat ! A man all things to all men !'

'A successful politician—yes.'



‘Is it true that you said you would not live unless your promise to the people were kept by the Crown?’

‘Who told you that?’

‘Janos went down into the city, and he heard it there.’

‘I cannot tell how any one could know it. It was said only to Kantakuzene.’

‘But it is true?’

‘Yes, it is true. How could I have lived discredited and dishonoured in your sight, and in the sight of my nation?’

A radiance of admiration, of sympathy, and of comprehension lightened her face.

‘You should have been an Illyris!’ she said, in that pride of race which is so far above mere vanity or egotism.

Othyris smiled involuntarily. No other woman would have spoken of her race as greater than his own.

‘Would that I had been!’ he murmured. ‘I should be nearer to you.’

He regretted the last words as soon as he had uttered them, for they chilled and alarmed her, though she took no notice of them; but the warmer, more sympathetic, more intimate manner she had hitherto shown was frozen back into her usual reserve.

‘She thinks I take advantage of her gratitude,’ he reflected; and he regretted having thus alarmed her.

They were both silent. The sun shone on the old cream-hued marble of the house wall, the green trails of the Madonna’s herb growing in its fissures, the silvery leaves of the olives, the fair classic

profile of Ilia Illyris and the sombre black folds of her gown. Othyris stood and looked at her with all his soul speaking in his eyes ; but her eyes were looking downward on the rough grass at her feet and she did not see, because she did not wish to see, what his would have told her.

She was distressed though she did not show any distress. She was divided between her gratitude to him and her fear of him—gratitude for his acts, fear of his passion. What he had done appealed to her in the strongest way ; to her sympathy, to her family pride, to her admiration of heroic and patriotic conduct ; but she was afraid of the feeling for herself which it was impossible to ignore, even though it had been as yet scarcely crystallised into words.

The Gunderöde had ever been fatal to the Illyris. He who had been carried to his grave in the Pantheon had rued the day when he had trusted in the monarch by whose side he now lay in the community of death. All her heart went out to the young man who stood before her, for his devotion to the dead, for his courage in great peril, for his loyalty to his word and to the people ; but in his relations to herself she doubted him, she shrank from him, she feared him, she saw in him only the treachery of his family to hers.

She rose from the seat under the house wall, and moved towards the archway of the entrance.

‘Believe me, sir,’ she said in a low tone, her eyes still looking away from him, ‘I feel most deeply, most gratefully, all that you have done for the sake of the dead and in the defence of the populace ; I admire your actions, I respect them, I honour them ; but, as I have told you before now, there can be no

friendship between you and me. Even for you to come here, now that he is no more with me, is not possible. There is a gulf that must ever yawn between us. You have done your utmost to atone for your grandsire's crimes; but they were written in blood, the blood of the people, and the blood of my fathers. Nothing can wash them out—for me. You regret them, but you cannot efface them by any courage or nobility of your own. I have said so to you many times.'

'You have,' said Othyris, and his colour changed from red to white, and white to red, in the intensity of his emotions and his indignation. 'But you have no right to make the living bear the burden of the faults of the dead. If you honour my actions in the last two days, you must at least respect me. You cannot admire a man's conduct, and despise himself.'

'I have never said that I despised you. All your public conduct would impose respect on any one. Had it not done so, he would never have received you here. But between you and me there can never be any friendship, any intimacy. If the past were not set between us, the present would render it impossible. I am poor, alone, and of no account. I cannot receive you here now that my great-grandfather is dead.'

'Why?'

'Why? Is it necessary to say?'

'I see no reason. You attach no importance to royalty or to rank, therefore why set them as a barrier between you and one who, equally with yourself, sets no store on them?'

'I attach no weight to them; but the world attaches much. You are what you are; it cannot

be altered. And I, being what I am, cannot, I repeat, receive you here.'

'You mean that you will not?'

'Well, put it so. I will not.'

'You are cruel—and——'

He was about to say 'ungrateful,' but his generosity kept the reproach unspoken. She answered the unuttered thought.

'Oh, no,' she murmured, and the melody of her voice faltered. 'I am not cruel, nor am I thankless. If the nation have honoured him at the last it is due to you, to you alone. If I believed still in the God of my childish prayers, I would pray for you day and night. But you are what you are: you are a son of the King; you are Elim of Gunderöde; there are only two lives between you and the throne. I am poor and alone, though I have enough for my house and for my bread. You must see, sir, that there can be no friendship between us. If you persist in coming here you will drive me away from the only place that I can regard as home.'

There was a pathetic supplication in her voice from which the coldness and the pride had passed away, and in her eyes there was a mist as of unshed tears. He saw that she spoke in entire sincerity, and not without pain to herself; he was touched, but he was not convinced; his anger was disarmed, but his desire was only increased. He felt that he could not, at such a moment of bereavement, say all that it was upon his lips to say, but he did not for a moment accept her decision and her dismissal. It was upon his lips to cry to her: 'I love you! I love you! I will give up everything for your sake!' But he held his peace. She was alone.

He had profaned love too often to be willing to speak of it in the same breath with her name. He scarcely dared to let his thoughts dwell on it, for the family of the Illyris had been already too deeply wronged by his own House for him to dream of further wrong; and what else, save wrong, could love if offered from him to her be deemed?

He had been received at that house by the hero of Argileion and Samaris with forgiveness for the offences of his race, and had come thither in frank good faith. Every law of honour and of conscience forbade him to abuse the reception given to him by one, once so great, and in old age so utterly helpless, as had been Platon Illyris.

Receiving no reply or promise from him she said, almost in supplication:

‘Sir—sir—surely you must see for yourself that you must never come here now that he can no longer receive you? Your visits were to him. They must cease now he is no more.’

He was silent and mortified. Here was the only place where his presence was not welcome, his remembrance coveted, his visit received with gratitude, pride, and emotion.

‘Why are you so harsh to me?’ he said, after waiting in vain to hear some softening word.

‘Harsh!’ she said with some impatience. ‘There is no question of harshness or kindness that I am aware. It is obvious that you have no reason to come now that he can neither hear you nor speak to you.’

‘It was not wholly for him,’ murmured Elim, and the hesitation and timidity of a boy of eighteen came over him, and he paused in confusion.

‘Can I be of no use to you in any way?’ he added, humbly, fearing he had offended her.

‘None, sir,’ she answered. ‘You can only do us harm.’

‘That is a cruel answer. Some power at least I have.’

‘You have too much power. You are one of the elect of the earth. You must see that now he is no more you must not cross this threshold.’

‘Why? Whatever power I possess is but your humblest servant. Whatever you might bid me do, I would do.’

‘I bid you go, and not return. Obey me since you have promised to obey.’

‘Why? Why should we be strangers to each other? Why live as though we were enemies?’

‘Because your race and mine can have no bond of friendship. He told you so, again and again.’

‘Why am I to suffer for the sins, or the falseness, of my forefathers? The crime against Illyris was the crime of Theodoric alone.’

‘It lies on you. It lies on every member of your House.’

‘Had the nation no share in it?’ said Othyrus with reproach. ‘If the people had been true to their liberator, my family would have been powerless against him.’

‘That may be true,’ she said slowly. ‘But can a dog defend his master if the dog has been chained and muzzled? Helianthus was that dog. Who chained him? Who muzzled him?’

Othyrus was silent. To reason with her was useless; to tempt, to persuade, to entreat her were

equally in vain ; unless her own heart turned traitor to her creed no other assailant would move her.

She looked at him with her clear, calm, meditative eyes, and there was no emotion in them ; no timidity—none of the fear of a virginal passion. She was always the goddess of those classic groves, aloof from all mortal weakness.

‘Go!’ she said to him, not harshly but with firmness. ‘Go, sir. You have many duties, many interests, many friends. Forget Aquilegia. Remember only that you have done a noble action in defence of a great memory. Your own conscience should be enough reward. Farewell.’

She would not have been human had she been wholly insensible to the power she possessed ; but she was without vanity, she was unspoiled by contact with other women, and her antagonism to the reigning race was far stronger in her than any personal feeling. She hated their past : she hated their present.

A great offence rose up in Othyris for a moment ; caste, usage, privilege, consciousness of pure purpose, and inherited instincts of command, all flushed his veins with anger, and made him for one instant ready to turn his back on her for ever : to leave her to any fate, to tear his adoration of her out of his heart and memory. Was it possible that any woman could dare speak so to him, a Prince of Helianthus ?

She did not even look at him or wait to see the effect of her words. She went up the narrow wooden stairs in the light of the morning, opened the door of her chamber, and went within. She did not draw the bolt, for she knew that he would not follow her. He held her in too high esteem. He was too true a gentleman.

He was very pale and his breath came fast and painfully ; he had been dismissed and wounded ; he felt lower than the lowest of the naked men crawling through the surf below on the shore, with the creels of rotted seaweed on their bowed backs.

A woman's unkindness penetrates, hurts, rankles, festers in the heart of a man, as no outrage from one of his own sex can do ; and Ilia was the one living being out of the whole multitudes of earth who had the power to wound Othyrus !

Ilia that evening sat at the barred casement of her chamber and looked at the moon, nearly at its full rise beyond the olive-trees. The solitude and the solemnity of death were still in the silence of the house. The sense of a vanished presence, of something for ever lost and gone, were in the quiet place ; the scent of the old books blent with the odour of the wild-flowers ; if men spared the place, the books would last and the flowers bloom through centuries ; Illyris alone was gone, never to return.

A great sense of loneliness was upon her. She had leaned on his wisdom as on a staff which would never fail ; and now the staff was broken.



## CHAPTER XXV

WHEN Othyris reached his palace that evening he found himself under arrest, and confined to his rooms. He was not surprised. Arrest had been a frequent punishment, received by him for lesser offences than his had been that day. The guard had been doubled round his palace, and the troops were still confined to barracks.

The governor of the city and other great functionaries, civil and military, were perpetually exchanging consultations with each other and passing to and from the Soleia.

One Ministry had fallen ; another had not yet been formed ; it was such an interregnum as the King would willingly have had continued indefinitely, since it left him sole lord and arbiter of current events, within the limits of that Constitution which galled and fretted him so sorely in the free exercise of his will.

That under his rule, during his reign, a popular victory such as the day had seen should have been possible was the most acute mortification to him. The cypher telegrams of Julius's on the event, in their sarcastic condolence and their ironical sympathy, were like gad-flies in a raw wound. Julius was no doubt wondering why Helios was not placed in a

state of siege. John of Gunderöde knew that he must seem a poor creature to his dominant nephew.

When the population of Helios became aware of Elim's arrest it was indignant, and willing, had it known how, to rescue and revenge him. The city was in ferment. Angry groups discussed and condemned the arrest until far into the night. Work was neglected ; in the docks and many other places it was entirely suspended. Strong measures were taken by the authorities to prevent any violence or harangues, or meetings of any sort. Most of the shops and places of refreshment or of amusement were closed. The palaces of the aristocracy and plutocracy were shuttered and their iron gates were bolted and locked. The guard around and within the Soleia was doubled, and the troops were, as on the previous day, confined to barracks ready for any emergency. The aspect of Helios was that of a city in a state of siege or on the eve of revolution.

But John of Gunderöde was not alarmed ; he knew the Helianthines. They were like women, loud and excessive in their emotions, but in action weak and hesitating. Their stomachs knew not the beef and beer of the Guthones. It was a wave of remembrance, of reverence, of repentance, which swept through the land from the Mare Magnum to the alps of Rhætia. It might die down like a fire of straw ; it might live on till it burnt all that was opposed to it. No one could say ; but it was alight, and the King's son had held the torch to the tow. The King consulted no one. He was the father of the offender, the sovereign of the country, the head of the army. Othyris was in a triple sense guilty towards him. He caused a court-martial to be held *pro forma*, but its

sentence was a foregone conclusion—a foreseen and dictated condemnation. The crime of the King's second son was, in the judgment of the King himself, of the military caste, of the conservative party, of the Court at home and all other Courts abroad, utterly unmentionable and unpardonable.

It was a sin against the sacred *manes* of all the kings who had ever lived and ruled ; every imperial and monarchical sentiment in the world had been outraged by his public escort through the city of the funeral of Illyris. Even Kantakuzene dared not defend such an action.

When asked why he had not endeavoured to obtain the royal assent to his escort of the funeral, Othyris answered that there had been no time to seek it ; also that he did not think his accompaniment of the bier was one which required any permission from the Crown. It had been an inoffensive testimony of a perfectly natural union of sentiment on his part with the people of Helios.

‘You must be aware, sir,’ said the President, ‘that such an act on your part was on the contrary most offensive to the Crown.’

‘I do not see the offence,’ said Othyris. ‘Neither on my own part, nor on that of the populace, was there any disrespect shown to my father or to the State.’

‘What, sir ! Not the burial of a revolutionist in the same temple with Theodoric the Great !’

‘They fought side by side once. Of the two it is not Platon Illyris who has the lesser title to a place in that classic sepulchre.’

A murmur of horror from the officers assembled in council followed this speech. The words would

have been shocking from any one,—but from a prince of the blood !

‘ Let me caution you, sir, such speeches as yours cannot assist your defence, they must increase your punishment.’

‘ That will be as it may.’

‘ You are wofully mistaken, sir, as a prince, as a son, as an officer.’

‘ It is inevitable that a military tribunal should think so.’

Those who sat in judgment were perplexed. Any other person making use of such speech as his could have been shot. With Othyris they could not take so severely swift and simple a solution.

If they could only have bent him to any measure of retractation, of admission of offence, of regret, of apology, their course of action would have been clearer to them.

The examination lasted long and was full of wearisome repetition. Othyris did not alter or increase his replies either in matter or in manner. He had done that which he had done out of respect for the dead man, and out of consciousness that his own House had never shown either respect or gratitude to the great patriarch by whom Helianthus had been freed from the foreigner.

‘ Platon Illyris,’ he replied, ‘ was the liberator of Helianthus.’

‘ Sir, you forget your great and revered ancestor.’

‘ I forget nothing.’

‘ Do you consider, sir, that a prince of your House should have publicly proclaimed his sympathy with a republican ?’

‘ I consider that my family, beyond all others,

owes gratitude and honour to the victor of Argileion and of Samaris.'

'He was a rebel against your illustrious ancestor.'

'He had full right to be so, if he were.'

'That is strange language on your part, sir, being who you are.'

'Being who I am, I am bound to speak the truth.'

To most of those present it seemed that a military execution in the courtyard of the fortress would have been the most wise and the most just end to an unpardonable scandal. But what would the people of Helianthus, the citizens of Helios, think of such a sentence passed by a father on a son, by the head of a nation on the favourite of that nation?

They felt that if a hair of the head of this rebel were touched, the city certainly, and probably after it the country, would rise in arms. True, Elim being dead would be powerless to profit by their rising; but before now dead men have had more sway than their living foes.

Three days went by without any news reaching those at Aquilegia from the city. Janos was forbidden by his lady to go down to the gates, for she was afraid that his ignorance and his excitement might get him into trouble there, in his pride at the triumph of his late master. No one came; the few necessities of life were at hand on the soil and in the cupboard; there was less need than ever for any expenditure to meet their simple wants. Therefore nothing was known by any one there of the arrest of Othyris until the fourth day, when, as it was market-day, Janos could not be kept on the land, as he had produce to sell and calves to fetch home. He returned late,

greatly distressed and agitated, consigning the calves to Philemon.

‘The great lord is being sent away,’ said Janos, when he came up to the house.

‘What do you mean?’ asked Maïa, who was spinning by the well.

‘Our prince who saved Philemon,’ replied Janos. ‘They sent him away, to keep him away for years and years, that the people may not see him. They were all talking of it in the streets. The King, his father, wills it so. The King is jealous of him. The people are very angry.’

‘Are you sure of what you say?’

‘Sure? Ay, I am sure. A score of mouths yelled it at me. The city is angry.’

‘But why does the King do this? What is his offence?’

‘They say it is because he put our Master in the House of the Immortals. That made the King hot against him.’

‘That is like enough,’ said Maïa gravely, and she resumed her spinning.

Ilia came towards them, from the stone bench by the porch where she had been seated; she had heard the words they spoke.

‘Is he to go into exile?’ she asked. Her face was very pale.

‘What is exile?’ said Janos. ‘To go out of the country?’

‘Yes.’

‘That I do not know. I think not.’

‘Why did you not ask more?’

‘The streets were like hives of swarming bees; they dumfounded me. Besides, I had to go to

the end of the world to fetch the bull calves. But this I heard from a dozen mouths in the morning, and then again as I brought the calves through the city : he is to be shut up far away.'

'For what he did the other day?'

'Ay, for that. So they say.'

Ilia was silent.

'Some said the people should rise,' added the peasant; 'but others said no, they were not ready, and the King is strong.'

'The King is very strong,' muttered Maïa.

Ilia said nothing; she went away under the shade of the olive branches. The sun was setting, a dusky gold shining through the grey shadows of the great trees. She walked on alone through their solitudes; what she had heard smote her conscience with a sense of unworthiness and coldness; he suffered for her and hers, and he had received scarcely a dry crust of gratitude.

'And I scarcely thanked him. I closed the house to him,' thought she; and the tears stood in her eyes and blinded her to the sunlight, and to the blaze of the distant dome of gold under which Platon Illyris and Theodoric lay side by side, their enmities forgot, their valour alone remembered in Helios.

At sunrise she sent Maïa down into the city to hear if the tidings brought by Janos were confirmed. The woman returned before noon and said that they were true. All the people of Helios were agitated by them; some wished for a demonstration before the Soleia, but the hours slipped away and nothing was done; only the number of the city guards and carabineers was doubled. It was not known whether

the Duke of Othyris had already gone, but it was generally believed that he had taken his departure by a night train ; rumours as to the length of his term of banishment were various, and always greatly exaggerated. The populace were incensed, but helpless for want of a controlling hand.

As Maïa spoke, the noon sun struck the golden dome of the Pantheon where it stood amidst its cypress groves on the other side of the bay. Through a break in the woods it was visible across the water, the dome shining in the meridian light. Othyris had opened the gates of the Temple to Platon Illyris, and had been chastised for the act as for a crime.

That morning a letter was given by the common postman to the boy Philemon, as he worked in the lower woods.

‘Take that to your mistress,’ said the letter-carrier. He took it to her.

It was a note of only a few lines in the handwriting of Othyris. It said briefly that he had been condemned to twelve months’ detention in a fortress, and added :

*‘I beg you not to be distressed. I am proud to have merited such punishment in so just a cause. Accept the homage of your humble servant.’*

It was signed merely ‘Elim.’

The note dropped from Ilia’s hand on the cushion of the lace at which she worked. The shock was great to her. She was conscious that she had not deserved from him so much devotion or such total forbearance from reproach. A year of his life was



lost through her! She could never give that year back to him. Its slow, long, cruel hours would drag their dull length away, and be for ever dead and buried like a sunless day.

‘I am sorry—oh, I am sorry!’ she murmured; the tears swam in her eyes, an intense sense of her debt to him and of his sacrifice to her filled her with regret which was well-nigh remorse. She could never give him back this year of his youth which he was about to spend in captivity for her and hers. She felt humbled and ashamed.

That night she could not sleep. In the morning she sent Janos to the market in the city.

‘Bring me news of what has happened,’ she said to him. He brought her news, with sobs of rage in his chest, and brown hairy hands clenched.

‘He is gone,’ he said. ‘They have sent him away into prison. It was done at night all secretly. He is there in the fortress of Constantine. The people are curs, sheep, cravens. They let this thing be done!’

In the fortress of Constantine! Where Theodoric had confined Illyris! Truly he had paid with his person for the offences of his forbears, for the falsehood of his race.

‘What shall we do, O daughter of Illyris?’ cried Janos. ‘Command, I will give my life.’

‘We can do nothing, my friend,’ she answered. ‘We are weak as water, you and I.’

‘But the people? They would be with us, and for him.’

‘Platon Illyris lay five years in the casemates of that prison, and the people let him lie. What can they do against the metal mouths of cannon? Pray,

Janos ; you believe in prayer. That is all that you can do.'

Janos swore a great oath on the names of saints and pagan gods, who were all one to him.

'My arm is strong. It should be broken from shoulder to wrist for him. He gave me back Philemon.'

'If ever the time come, yes, do not spare yourself. But now you can do nothing. The King is strong and cruel.'

'Those lads missed the King. I should not miss him. My knife is sure. In a sure hand a knife is better than a bullet.'

'Hush ! The Master, were he here, would bid you do no evil that good may come, nor would Prince Elim wish for vengeance.'

Janos, his bronzed face wet with sweat and black with passion, slunk away like a dog forbidden to avenge a friend. Ilia went within.

The dove which had been often fondled by Platon Illyris flew to her and stroked her cheek with its caressing beak.

'O bird of peace, you are no bird of ours !' she cried, in passion. 'The Illyris were men of war. Alas that I, a woman, and alone, cannot lift their sword, cannot lead their people !'

## CHAPTER XXVI

DETENTION for life in a fortress would not have seemed too much severity in the esteem of the King. But with the shrewd caution which was his most useful quality, he knew that the nation would not consent to any such sentence. The majority of the people admired the conduct of his second son ; and too great severity of the popular favourite would provoke dangerous resentment, perhaps even dangerous action. He would have liked nothing better than to consign Elim for life to one of the great, grim, fortified buildings standing in desolate places of the hills or of the sea shores, which served as military prisons, as barracks, or as powder-magazines, and where many a young officer, condemned by court-martial, had fretted his soul away in the dreary casemates, amongst those rugged solitudes where no sound ever came except the tramp of sentinels, the grounding of arms, the lumbering of caissons, the cries of the sea birds on the waters, and the plovers on the moors. To one of these strongholds the King would willingly have consigned Othyrus, and have left him there, to eat his heart out like the caged eagle he had pitied in his childhood. But he did not dare.

Obstinate, insolent, disdainful of the people as he

was, John of Gunderöde knew that such a course might lead to a revolt of the masses and to that exile of himself which Kantakuzene had pictured to himself with so much amusement. If he had been sure of his army he would not have hesitated ; but he was not sure.

His secret reports left him no doubt as to the increase of socialism and republicanism amongst his troops : the murrain in the patient flocks, of which his eldest son had spoken. So, with his usual power of restraint upon his own desires, he limited himself to the mild punishment of the banishment of Othyris to one of his own estates, Hydaspe, for twelve months' time, in an honourable captivity with which public opinion could not presume to quarrel. Hydaspe was far away from the capital, on the south-east coast, in a sparsely-peopled province ; Othyris would be removed from the sight of the populace of Helios, and the King considered that what a mob does not see it forgets.

Kantakuzene greatly regretted the sentence ; but it was impossible for him to oppose a decision of the head of the State and the head of the army. He too knew the temper of the Helianthines. Removed from their sight, it was probable that Othyris would retain little place in their memories. They would not march across half the width of the country to his place of captivity in their tens of thousands and bring back in triumph to the capital the man they loved. They had not the grit in them to do that. His presence could move them to anything ; in absence he would be rarely remembered, or so their rulers thought. Personally Kantakuzene was much attached to him ; he felt the charm of an unselfish character

and of generous and exalted ideals ; but being now First Minister of the Crown, he could not but feel relieved from the extreme embarrassment which the presence of Othyris caused to him in Helios—an embarrassment which might increase perilously at any moment of public excitement.

Kantakuzene was sincerely distressed, but he was in the midst of all the agitation, anxiety, and difficulty of forming his Cabinet, of apportioning the loaves and fishes between the numerous claimants, of endeavouring to disarm enmity, to confirm hesitation, to pass over friendship which might be safely slighted, to irritate none, to alienate none, and, above all, to remain sole master of the situation. At such a vital moment Kantakuzene had little thought to give even to one who so much interested him as the second son of the King. If he could have interfered successfully, he would have done so even to his own hindrance ; but it was impossible for him to touch a question so delicate and personal, to interfere in a matter which was exclusively at once a military and a family question for the judgment and the action of the sovereign alone. Kantakuzene consoled himself with the reflection that Othyris would doubtless be pardoned as soon as some months of his punishment had been endured, and in the agreeable sense of dominance and of success which came to him as he presided at his first Cabinet Council, he had not much time or inclination to give to the prisoner of Hydaspe. ‘He is quixotic ! He is quixotic !’ said Kantakuzene to others, with a sigh. ‘It is a fine defect, but it is a defect !’

Men have to take the world as it is, and live in it as best they may. It is not quite the bear-garden

that satirists say, but neither is it quite the rose-garden which poets picture. Kantakuzene, who in his early time had gathered his roses, now preferred to tame the bears. Perchance Othyris would do so also in the future.

It was characteristic of the King that he did not select *Ænothrea*, which was beloved by Elim and beautiful in every way, as the estate on which his son was to pass a year of solitude. He chose *Hydaspe*, which was hot as a furnace in summer and cold as the North Pole in winter—a great mediæval pile which had stood many sieges, standing on bare rocks which rose out of marshes and rice-fields, and which looked on a river which was a boiling torrent in winter and a bed of stones in the dry season. There was, indeed, the sea near at hand; but it was separated by three miles of sand and quicksands from the fortress, and was a portion of the eastern waters on which a sail was rarely seen—a melancholy and land-locked bay, on which a red and rayless sun rose drearily in the canicular heats. It was not a portion of the inheritance from Basil, but had been bequeathed to Othyris by a cousin-german. It was a possession of little value, although of great extent and antiquity; its revenues were always returned by him to the poor dwellers on the soil, chiefly workers in the rice-fields or in the dreary plains of maize,—people whose lot he could make less hard but could never render otherwise than melancholy; burnt up by the heat in one season, chilled by the blasts and frosts at another, getting up at every dawn to toil in the same furrows and ditches, giving their sons to the cannon and the barracks, seeing their daughters naked to the thighs in

the rice channels, living pell-mell in their conical huts, their wives dropping the fruit of their womb as ewes drop lambs by the roadside, seeing always the sun go down upon their hopeless labour which could never change.

If Othyris had given his parole not to leave Hydaspe he would not have been subjected to any form of surveillance. But he would not give it. Therefore his movements were watched continually, and there were sentries at all the doors and gates of the castle. The place was his indeed, but the will of another, not of himself, ruled there. He was not allowed either to have any boat, large or small, in the bay for any movement on the sea. It was imprisonment in all but name, and when he heard the tramp of the sentinels on the ramparts or the grounding of arms by the soldiers on the gateways, he realised that his freedom was as completely lost for the time as any condemned convict's. True, he was still owner of Hydaspe and still a prince of Helianthus, and the guards set over him all saluted as he passed and stood at attention so long as he was in sight; but he was virtually and to all intents and purposes a captive, though an undiminished deference and an elaborate ceremonial of etiquette still preserved to him the dignity of a rank which he hated, and which now, more than ever before, seemed to him an irony and a burden.

So he devoured his soul in silence, and the heavy intense heat grew more painful, and evening after evening the red, rayless ball of the sun sank down behind the rocky ridges of the interior, and another joyless and useless day was dead.

Ilia was three hundred miles away, in the green,

shadowy Helichrysum hills, where the streams ran fresh and cool throughout the longest day.

At any other time Othyris might not have disliked this dreary solitude, since it would have given him time for study, for art, for philosophy ; and he would have taken pleasure in putting on canvas the desolate, severe landscapes of this joyless province. But at the present moment the distance separating him from Aquilegia, his ignorance of what shape Ilia's future might take, his fear that she might be molested or watched, the longing of a man in love to be near the object of his love, made his imprisonment, three hundred miles from Helios, almost as unbearable as if he had been sent to a convicts' island in the distant sea which rolled away from those eastern shores of Helianthus to the still mysterious Orient. At times his obedience to his father's commands seemed to him cowardly and unworthy ; at others he felt that he could not in duty, in honour, give the nation an example of insubordination to a man who was the head of the State as well as his father. Kantakuzene had said rightly that the second son of the King was not a revolutionist any more than he was a reactionist. People who believe in any extreme are satisfied with their faith and with themselves ; but Othyris had not such consolation. He would have thought that he had erred if he had rebelled ; he feared that he was a coward because he obeyed.

At times, indeed, he was tempted to escape. There was a close cordon of sentinels drawn round the great rocky pile of Hydaspe, but he believed that his gentlemen would assist him and his guards shut their eyes to his secret departure. But even in



this, his own scruples stood like incorruptible gaolers in his path. His flight would entail degradation and punishment on those who rendered it possible ; even if he himself succeeded in gaining his liberty, those who remained behind him would pay the price of it to one who never pardoned. Moreover, if he were to remain in the country, he would be speedily retaken ; and if he were to leave the country what use would freedom be ? He would be still farther from Aquilegia.

There is no punishment so stupid or so stupefying as captivity. The strongest intellects feel its bitter narcotic dull their brain and corrode their energies. A man stays happily on a half-acre of ground when he stays on it by his own choice ; but a principality is insupportable when the will of another forbids him to pass its confines.

Othyris wrote to Ilia Illyris.

It was an imprudence, but no man in love was ever prudent yet if his heart were tender and his years were few. Moreover, he felt in her that profound trust which was inspired by the limpid serenity of her regard, the character of her thoughts, and the traditions of her lineage. An Illyris might be betrayed, but never could betray.

His letter was not answered, but it was not returned. That was the utmost he had hoped for when he wrote. After an interval he wrote again ; he had never written in confidence before to any human being ; it was a new and delightful outlet of his inmost thoughts. It was unwise, it was imprudent, it was dangerous ; but it was for those reasons an irresistible temptation to lay bare his inmost self to the one mind which was capable of

sympathy with him. That he received no reply did not surprise or chill his ardour ; she could not have written to him without being something less than what he thought her, something lower than an Illyris should have been. He sent his letters by the common post, for if he had sent them by messengers he imagined that they would have been returned ; she would have taken alarm at such a correspondence. He hoped that coming, like house swallows, noiselessly and familiarly, they would not cause her any apprehension. What is written enters the brain by the eyes, and perhaps penetrates more deeply than what is spoken and enters by the ears.

The first of the letters which Ilia received from Othyris came from the town in the wallet of Janos with the bread and meat and other frugal fare. It had been given to him by a postman whom he had met on the shore. Ilia had no correspondence, as she had no friends except the nuns in the north, who never wrote, and the lace merchant who wrote only on the receipt of work. The first letter from Othyris caused her extreme surprise and emotion. It was impossible to read its pages without belief in its sincerity. There was no possible cause to doubt the veracity of its expressions ; and in its humility there was a contrast to the position of the writer which could not fail to touch the reader. Whether she would or no, Ilia could not resist the conviction that he meant most absolutely all he said. The letters did not alarm her, because though eloquent they were restrained, though ardent they were timid, though impassioned they were reverent. They were the letters of a poet, not of a libertine. All that was best in him, all that was simplest, truest, most sensitive, most unhappy, was

expressed in them ; the dross of the world and its vanities and its passions was burned out of his soul as it spoke to hers ; he was a man who loved her and was no more, no less. She felt that his devotion to her was great, but she was too ignorant of the world to be able to measure the greatness of it.

His adoration might be a passing caprice ; a passion inflamed by difficulty ; the wilful insistence of a spoilt child of fate ; but it was absolutely true.

Ilia read the first of his letters once, twice, thrice, in the solitude of the lonely house ; then she wound it about a stone and dropped it from her window into the open well which was immediately beneath, its marble copings overgrown by stone crop and violet roots, its depths never troubled save by the old bronze pail let down by a cord at dawn and twilight. The stone smote the water, and she knew that the letter would in a brief time be soaked, obliterated, destroyed ; but words which could not die lived on in letters of fire in her remembrance. Each letter which he wrote her sank to the same watery grave. The peasants believed that the well went down, down, down to the very centre of the earth ; it seemed to her that there could be no better keeper of his secret than that dark, still, mysterious silence of an unfathomed source.

No vanity tempted her to keep his correspondence. The nature which is born free from vanity cannot be touched by it.

Ilia had in her a great pride, the pride of race ; but such pride excludes vanity, as the true heir excludes the bastard. Letter after letter as the weeks went on succeeded each other and passed to that safe and

silent grave, although it hurt her somewhat as though she slew a living thing to consign those ardent, tender, faithful words to the dumb, unmeasured depths which mirrored the stars and the planets and the moon-rays, and sometimes were white with showers of acacia blossoms, and sometimes moved and muttered sullenly, as seismic forces troubled their subterranean springs, but which never gave back what was given to them : whether written word, or faded flower, dead dragon-fly, or dropped plume of wounded kestrel, or tears which fell from a woman's eyes as she leaned over its moss-grown parapet.

It never occurred to Ilia to send the letters back to Othyris. It would have seemed to her too harsh and thankless an act to the man by whom the gates or the House of the Immortals had been opened to the body of Platon Illyris. So his letters did Othyris this service, that gradually he became in her sight the writer of them rather than aught else ; no longer only the King's son, the descendant of Theodoric of Gunderöde, the hereditary enemy of the Illyris. In his presence she never forgot this ; but in his letters she did. In them, one human heart spoke to another : that was all. The finest ruses of the studied seducer could not have served him better than did the simple, natural, and imprudent impulse which had moved him to write thus to her.

Sentiment and sensuality were alike unknown to Ilia. Fear was a stranger to her temper. She was an Illyris. Something of the fire of Argileion, something of the steel of Samaris had entered into her blood ; she would have gone to the stake without a visible tremor ; she would have borne torture without a cry ; she was brave with the bravery transmitted to

her by great men ; but, even as her young bosom was soft and flower-like, so her young heart had its weakness ; her affections were dormant, but they were alive ; and as the bosom would fill with milk for the unborn child, so would the soul fill with the desire of unrealised joys. At her heart her youth was living as it was living in the light of her eyes, in the gloss of her hair, in the blue of her veins, in the roundness of her breasts : that sleeping youth which now awoke in her, tremulous, virgin, and afraid, but living. The well in which the letters of Elim were thrown was to her as the magic crystal in which the destiny of those who gazed therein was mirrored. She was afraid of what she saw, but she saw it. Their sentences seemed to stand out under the stars ; their words seemed echoed from the deep waters down in the earth. When the nightingales came with the irises and the windflowers they seemed to sing of them and of nothing else.

She was calmer, stronger, more self-controlled than most women of her years. She had dwelt within reach of the frost of a great lone soul, and it had chilled her youth in her ; she had been led to see as an old man, alone with his memories, had seen a world unworthy of and ungrateful to him.

## CHAPTER XXVII

OTHYRIS had been in solitude with the serried ranks of the stone hills between him and the world of men during six weary months, when the most unlooked-for stroke of fate opened the gates of his prison and called him back to life. Relays of mounted messengers, for there was no telegraph from any place to this remote spot, brought him an order from his father to come to the capital at once with all speed : his eldest brother was dangerously ill with angina.

Theo ill ! Othyris could not credit it. Theo, the concentration of robust, self-satisfied, brutal and arrogant manhood, brought down to the same level as the beggar starved by the roadside, a conscript slain by a sunstroke on a march, a miner suffocated by the noxious fumes of a gas ! It was incredible. Rigid as a suit of armour, all-sufficient to himself as a deity, unbending as a rod of iron, as sure of his own wisdom as a high priest of his, full of blood, of health, of authority, of food and wine, and muscular force—Theo, who believed in doctors as prophets, who had his residences deluged by disinfectants, who had always been sure that any one who was ill was so through his or her own fault,—Theo, whose health and strength were as great as those of prize-bull on

a pasture, had contracted a fatal malady : that of the angina.

How he had contracted it, neither he nor his physicians and surgeons could tell. He remembered that a fly had flown down his throat as he had ridden through the home woods of one of his country-places to a slaughter of wild boars. The fly might possibly have brought the infection from some sick plebeian throat. Why would not common people all go into hospitals when they felt that anything was the matter with them ? There they were safe out of the way of others, and were useful to the Faculty as studies *in corpore vili* ! When he went home he could not eat any dinner ; he felt a brackish, nauseous taste in his mouth ; his throat was hoarse and uncomfortable ; he had a difficulty in swallowing. The Court physicians looked very grave. In the morning, to the consternation of his wife, his doctors, and his household, the disease had fully declared itself ; he was very ill ; his father was informed ; he became at once grotesque and piteous ; and death, which lends dignity and pathos to the most humble of creatures, stripped him bare of all his pompous greatness ; the butchered steer for which he had felt no compassion had gained from death more sorrowful nobility than he. At sunrise on the third day the great bell of St. Athanasius, tolling in long solemn notes, told the city of Helios that the heir to the throne was no more.

His wife, who had been sacrificed to his tyrannies for fourteen sunless and imprisoned years, wept for him tears which she sincerely believed to be those of a sincere sorrow.

His little daughters, who had never heard his step without fear, or been summoned to his presence

without apprehension, seeing their mother's woe, were moved to an innocent and unconscious hypocrisy, and did not dare to whisper even to each other that a load as of lead was lifted off their childish souls.

The shops were closed ; the muffled bells tolled ; the nobility and the bourgeoisie wore mourning ; the nation made believe that it was intensely shocked, intensely grieved, and mute out of fear ; but at its heart it was glad, and beyond all the populace was glad, that the heir to the throne was now the man it loved.

The one mourner who felt as much regret as his stolid egotism could permit him to feel at any time was the King. Theo could have been trusted to continue all the traditions of the House of Gunderöde ; Theo would never have yielded to maudlin sentiment or have stooped to popular dictation.

Theo would have always slept booted and spurred. Under him, Helianthus would have been a careful copy in miniature of the great Guthonic empire, all its natural instincts stamped out of it, all its youth weighted with musket and haversack, all its free speech silenced, all its gaiety eclipsed, all its energies crushed under one order,—‘obey.’

When John of Gunderöde realised that his second son was now unavoidably designated as his own immediate successor, he cursed the crookedness and crabbedness which makes circumstance jeer at mortals, and the undesired always become the inevitable. All his rigour, all his severity, all his acuteness, all his unmercifulness could not give him the power to shape and control the futurity of events.

The death of his heir-apparent was a greater blow to the King than any he had ever suffered except the



enforced disarmament of his carefully prepared expedition for war in the Dark Continent. He could have trusted Theo implicitly to move on his own lines, to govern with his own measures, to follow his own example in all ways. With Theo the jagged bit would have pressed firmer on the sensitive mouth of the blood-mare, and the knotted whip would have cut wounds unceasingly on the nervous, trembling, and highly-bred creature. Theo would have walked in the steps of his father, and being without even his father's measure of intelligence would have known no law but force. Under Theo, Helianthus would have been flogged on the road to Guthonic measures, Guthonic despotism, Guthonic brutality, and the strange Guthonic mixture of science and superstition and militarism would have been forced down the throat of the nation as a veterinary thrusts a medicine down the throat of a mare. The Guthonic empire had been the idol and ideal of the dead prince. But dead he was, in the prime of his early manhood ; and in his place stood Elim.

Never in all his life before had John of Gunderöde realised his own helplessness before the sledge-hammer of accident and the chances of mortality. His stubborn and unbending spirit realised for once its own impotency and incapacity. He could not save his eldest born from the darkness of the tomb, and he could not alter the succession to the throne. His olive cheek grew greyer, his cold eyes harder, he smoked unceasingly, he scarcely ever spoke, and when he did he growled like an angry mastiff. For three days he scarcely ate ; and in place of his burgundies and bordeaux he drank brandy. Every one has his own way of mourning ; this was his. On the fourth

evening he took up the menu card of his dinner and said the cook was a fool. On the fifth day he resumed his usual manner of life. But in his silent soul, tight shut as a bivalve on a rock, there was a bitter fury of regret, a sombre rage of useless sorrow.

Hydaspe was at a distance of over twenty hours from the capital ; the railway only went half the way, and the rest of the journey was made by relays of horses. When Othyris reached Helios he was met by the tidings that his brother was dead. What he had most dreaded had come to pass. He himself was heir-apparent to the throne.

He covered his face with his hands, and great tears forced themselves through his fingers. His sorrow was not for Theo, but for himself ; the burden of a power he abhorred seemed to lie on him like a rock rolled on to the breast of a living man. If only the little child had lived ! As he drove to his residence a murmur of delight and of respectful welcome rose from the crowds in the streets as they recognised his equipage, although the blinds were drawn. The cheers were checked immediately by the city guards, but the joy was in the hearts of the people. Their darling was now some day to be their ruler. 'He will reign over us,' they thought, 'and then there will be no more men to poke us in the ribs and drag us off to prison.' They, like the populace of every nation, imagined that a sovereign could do as he chose, and knew nothing of the innumerable threads which bind him like Gulliver. There was a dense crowd gathered in the Square of the Dioscuri, and although the people could not see Othyris as his

carriage passed rapidly between the gates of his palace, all the force of the guards of Helios could not prevent a great muffled shout of welcome rolling down the air and reaching him in his chamber.

‘They care for me, they believe in me,’ he thought. ‘Alas, poor people! What more power to serve them shall I ever have than a gilded puppet on a carnival car!’

He could not feel regret for Theo; he knew that Theo, as ruler, would have treated the people of Helianthus as a brute treats a timid colt or a sickly wife. Theo had prided himself on his hardness and recklessness, and nothing could have broken his backbone of steel except the grip of that skeleton-king who makes all other kings lie low as paupers.

Othyris sorrowed for himself, on whose life fell the crushing glacier of impending power; he sorrowed for the nation who would look to him for so much and to whom he could give so little; he sorrowed for the love of his life, more distant from him in his freedom and what the world deemed splendour than she had been in his captivity and solitude.

The great bell of the Cathedral tolled with its deep brazen tongue, and all the chimes of churches and chapels resounded in echo, proclaiming the death of one for whom all the land of Helianthus was supposed to mourn as a mother the loss of her first-born. Ilia heard the swell of the great threnody as it rose upwards from the city below, joining the booming of the surf upon the shore.

‘Who is dead?’ she asked Maïa, startled and vaguely apprehensive. ‘Some one in high place.’

‘The eldest son of the King,’ said the woman.

‘He died in the night of that fungus which grows in the throat.’

‘The Crown Prince dead ! Then !——’

‘It is the Prince Elim who will reign,’ said Maſa.

The waves of deep and solemn sound joined with the anger of a wind-driven sea on the beach below.

‘It is a cruel fate,’ thought Ilia ; she knew that to him of all others it would seem so. She remembered the words of Illyris : ‘If he lead the people or if he forsake the people, either way he will repent. To rule you must have iron in you. He has silver ; but silver will not make a sword-blade.’

All night long the bells, great and small, tolled all over the country, in cities and townships and hamlets, in lonely churches on bare hillsides, and in monasteries by lakes and streams ; and in the chapels of feudal castles, and on the solitary shores by the sea, from the Mare Magnum to the Rhætian mountains, the tongues of bronze told all the land that the heir to the throne was dead. But in the silent heart of Helianthus there was no sorrow ; there was only gladness, mute and timid gladness, hiding like a hunted hare, and rejoicing because the man they loved would one day or another rule over them. In their ignorance and their credulity the people believed that he would change the whole face of the country, set a barn of plenty beside every poor man’s hearth, lift the musket and the knapsack from every strippling’s back, and make the golden corn grow on every stony plain. In their ignorance they could not tell that in the kingdom of men individual character

can change little in the lot of the multitude or in the burdens borne by them. Though Solomon in all his glory, or Trojan in all his justice, were to reign in this actual time, he could not alter by a hair's breadth, by a gramme's weight, the pressure of poverty, the disparity of fates, the irony of circumstance, the brutality of war, the satire of success, the vast misery of the majority. But the people do not know that.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

OTHYRIS had no sleep that night. He felt like a man who lies pressed down under a rock which has fallen on him, leaving him breath and brain to suffer, but with no power to rise and move.

With the change of position went such liberty and such privacy as he had hitherto enjoyed. His life henceforward belonged entirely to others. He had never seriously feared the possibility of his own future reign. His eldest brother, risks of sport apart, had seemed a man certain of long life, as he had always been of health and strength. When he had thought of his own possible accession it had been with little apprehension of such a fate becoming ever a reality.

It was but half a year ago that he had heard the same outcries of popular affection rise from the same square and the same surrounding streets ; he could not doubt the preference of the people for himself. But to what, in its uttermost, could it lead ? Only to civil war. His father was not a man to take a passage in a steamer at the first intimation to him of his own unpopularity. If fully convinced of it, he might prefer his accumulated scrip to a struggle with a hostile people ; but he would not be easily convinced, and he had the temper of the bull-dog.

The night was moonlit and serene ; across the

masses of foliage of his gardens he could see the distant peaks of Mount Atys, faint and ghastly against the starlit skies on the other side of the bay of Helios.

Was Ilia sleeping under the guard of those snows as virginal as the white hills of her breast? Had she any memory in her dreams of him? Was he not farther away from her than ever, now that he was direct heir to that crown which had been seized by Theodoric?

The overwhelming desire to be in her presence was stronger than any prudence, either for his own sake or hers. Six months had passed since he had looked upon her face. The night was the long night of October; it had been evening when he had entered Helios; and, under the plea of fatigue, he had seen only two or three of his gentlemen, the most faithful and attached. When he dismissed these and retired for the night, he said to himself: 'She rises with the sun at all seasons; I can go there at dawn and return by eight o'clock in the forenoon.'

His absence would probably be noticed by his household, but he knew that he could trust the most devoted of them to conceal it from the rest; they would attribute it to some amatory tryst. He did what he had often done when on less innocent errands bent: he went down into his gardens and opened a little postern gate which led into the courts at the back of the palace where the stables, coach-houses, and other buildings were situated. All was still and closed, men and animals slumbered; the sentinels stationed there challenged, then recognising him, presented arms. He opened the door of the spacious line of loose boxes, in which his riding horses

were kept ; awakened one of his fleetest favourites, saddled her, and led her out by one of the gates, the sentinels of course remaining immovable. He was sure of their silence. He locked the door of the courtyard behind him, holding the mare by her bridle ; then mounted and rode towards the Gate of Olives on the other side of the city.

It was scarcely daybreak ; heavy mists hung over the sea, and as he went down the southern quay the air blew on him cold and refreshing as a draught from a mountain stream. Some fishermen, some men-of-war sailors, some dockyard labourers, alone passed him ; the sentinels on the quay saluted as their comrades had done ; there was no one else abroad in the dusk of the chilly autumn morn of which the shadows and the vapours hid Mount Atys from his sight. He rode as fast as it was possible to do on the slippery marble of the paven roads, and when he reached the barrier of the south-west gate the way to it was blocked by long strings of ox carts, and mule carts, and flocks and cattle, and laden asses, and peasants mounted and on foot, who had waited wearily there ever since the small hours of the night.

‘The accursed Octroi !’ thought Othyris. ‘The most brutal of all the taxes, save the blood-tax ! Can they find no better way to get the money they squander than to keep the husbandman out of his bed two-thirds of the night, and make his poor animals footsore and famished before sunrise?’

The guards, sleepy and sullen, were drawing back the huge bolts of the iron gates, swearing savagely at the throngs gathered there. With a sharp and



stern rebuke to them, as they, in fear and trembling, recognised him, Othyris passed through under the ancient portcullis into the familiar country road which wound up into the hills beyond. When he had got rid of the waiting crowd of patient labourers the way was clear. The day was fully risen; the fresh scents of the fields were blown about on the changeful winds, the wreaths of mists were drifting, whiter and whiter at each moment; the great crests of the Helichrysum hills were lifted one by one out of the clouds. He rode as fast as the steepness of the path would permit, towards that hermitage which had been scarcely absent an hour from his thoughts since he had last been there on that memorable day when the people of Helios had remembered Illyris. Every knot of thyme or clump of tussock grass beside the path, all the falling waters, some broad and deep as torrents, some mere threads of rippling moisture, all the great trees leaning down over the rocks and myrtle bushes,—all were familiar and welcome to him, and as the morning light widened and the winds moderated, the repose and beauty of the place sank like balm into his soul. It was still so early that the dews were heavy and the sun had not reached these woods; only a clear and solemn light awakened the woodlarks and the redcaps, and shone, green and transparent, through the branches of the oaks and olives.

His heart beat fast, and anxiety quickened his breath as he drew nearer and nearer to the house and passed the spot where he had met Ilia beside the old man's bier. That shyness of the true lover, which he had never felt before, came over him and made him fear that he should have no welcome. To

all others he was the heir of the throne, to her he was but her humble servant in his own sight, and less than that in hers. Had his letters made any way for him into her sympathies? He could not tell. He feared that there was no response in her to his own feelings. His soul had crossed the gulf of difference which divided them, but hers remained aloof upon a distant shore.

It was still early in the earliest hours of morning when Othyris reached the last portion of the bridle-path up which it was possible to urge a horse. He heard the sound of plough-oxen being urged by a human voice, but they were distant, far down in the twilight of the foliage, and he saw nearer to him two little lads with wooden tubs on their shoulders—such tubs, cone-shaped, as are used to carry water in drought or grapes in vintage-time. No doubt they were the younger sons of Janos, going to gather roots or fruits that did not grow at this altitude. He called to them and they stumbled up through the rank grass, frightened but obedient, for they recognised him. He gave them the bridle of the mare to hold, and said a word in her ear which she understood, bidding her wait there; then he went up on foot to the house, standing in the deep shadows of its great trees.

He saw Ilia on the threshold; she was throwing grain to the pigeons; the tamed dove of Illyris sat on her shoulder, and watched its wilder cousins eat and fight and flutter.

She looked so serene, so content, so wholly satisfied with these simple things, with only that shadow of sadness which the death of Illyris had left her, that Othyris could not think that he had been

remembered or regretted. He paused on the edge of the rough grass and the wild rose-bushes.

His shadow fell across the turf, and the dog Ajax came towards him with welcome and recognition. She looked up and let fall the boxwood bowl of grain. She did not speak. She stood still in the shock of surprise ; she had not known that he had arrived in Helios.

‘Have I done wrong?’ he said, as he stood with uncovered head. ‘May I hope for welcome? Or, if that is too much, for pardon?’

She was silent still ; he could not see on her countenance any expression of her emotions, any reflection of her mind ; she stood with the flock of pigeons at her feet ; the dove had flown on to the ivy of the roof. Was she indifferent? Was she angered? Was she thinking of the change in his position, or of the confessions of his letters? He could not tell. With his hand on the dog’s head he stood before her.

‘Have you no word for me?’ he said humbly.

‘What would you have me say?’ she murmured. ‘What have I to do with you? You are to rule in Helianthus.’

‘In some far-off future—or more likely never. Such a change was always possible. What has it to do with you and me? Will you not let me enter? Enter at least into his chamber?’

‘If you wish.’

She drew back and signed to him to pass her. Emotion, embarrassment, astonishment, were all so unusual in her life, so alien to her temperament, that they confused her ; she could not either welcome or repulse him. All he had done for her forbade

the one; all he had written to her, and all that circumstance made him and gave him, forbade the other.

‘I cannot pass before you,’ he said with a smile.

She understood; he might be what he would to the rest of the world; there at Aquilegia he chose to be only the scholar, the disciple, the pilgrim, who had stood before the hero of Argileion and Samaris.

She entered the house and opened the door of the book-room, in which the hundreds of volumes, the great leather chair, the elmwood table, laden with papers and old manuscripts, were all as they had been in the lifetime of the Master.

Othyris stood silent a few moments in respectful memory as men may stand beside a tomb.

Then he turned to Ilia.

‘You received my letters?’

‘Yes.’

‘Did you read them?’

A faint colour rose over her face. ‘Yes, and then I destroyed them.’

‘Why? Do you think me a coward, or what they said untrue?’

‘No, neither.’

‘Could you not have answered them?’

‘Silence answered them.’

‘Silence means many things.’

‘I thought you would understand—between you and me there can be no correspondence, there can be no sympathy.’

‘Why?’

‘Why? I have often told you. Now it is more impossible than ever. You are the heir to the throne.’

‘No one, no law, no nation, can make me accept that position unless I choose. I can say nothing more than I have in those letters. I am yours in any way, by any bond, you choose.’ His words broke down in an impatient sigh. ‘But nothing that I can say moves you more than a marble mask is moved. And yet——’

He was about to say : ‘I have suffered for your sake, I have lost a part of my life !’

But he checked the words unuttered. He would not remind her of her debt to him.

Ilia did not answer.

She stood by the great leather chair against the casement, through which a green light fell through the leaves of the ivy. She was prepared for his words by his letters ; but she was unprepared for his presence, and for the effect it had on herself. In the well without, those letters of his had perished, soaked in the deep, cold water of the subterranean spring ; but many of their lines had been burnt into her memory before she had dropped them into their tomb. Their recollection made her nervous, timid, self-conscious, ashamed, all that she had never been before ; the weakness of sex awoke in her.

She leaned her hand on the back of the old black chair as if to gain courage and strength from its contact ; the green cool light falling through the ivy leaves flickered on her face. She felt the passion of his gaze burn into her inmost being. That he loved her greatly she could not doubt ; that he might become dear to her she felt with terror. She heard the stern and haughty voice of Platon Illyris saying : ‘What have you, my daughter, to do with the House of Gunderöde ?’

‘Listen, sir,’ she said, gently but with firmness, to Othyris, ‘I am sensible of all we owe to you. I am conscious of what you have suffered for our sakes. I grieve for it. I cannot repay you all you have done for us. It is impossible to put into words my sense of it. But do not come here. You only pain me, and compromise yourself. You belong to the people of Helianthus. You are not free to do what you choose or what you wish. You are theirs : at once their lord and their servant.’

‘But if I will not be either?’

‘You cannot escape your obligations.’

‘Why not? It is a yoke laid on me by the accident of birth. I have the right to reject it if I choose.’

‘You could not change yourself if you did,’ she said sadly. ‘You could not wash the blood of Theodoric out of your veins. You could not be otherwise than one of the princes of his House though you beggared yourself or swept the streets. We are what we are born, till death releases us.’

‘Those are ideas of a world that is dead,’ he said, with anger and impatience. ‘Ideas of the days of blood-feud, of inherited hatreds, of Capulet and Montagu, of Monteuki and Salimbeni. Surely we belong to a calmer and colder time when the sins of the father are not visited on the children. We have lost much, but we have gained something. The chief of our gains is surely the temperate spirit of modern feeling.’

‘It is indifference, it is often even mere cynicism, that which you praise. There are wrongs which cannot die, which should not die, as long as memory lives.’

‘If you had any regard for me, you would have no memory but that.’

‘Perhaps.’

She spoke almost sorrowfully, almost regretfully. What she had felt for him in his absence died away in his presence.

He felt that it did so. It filled him with despair.

‘Is there any one living fitter to reign in Helianthus than you — fitter in body, in mind, in race?’

‘Oh, sir, you are mad!’ she said in mingled anger and fear. ‘Quite mad! I! False to all the creeds and traditions I have inherited? Apostate to all the religion of my people? Could I be so, the women of Helios would have a right to stone me in their streets.’

‘They would fling the roses of Helianthus under your feet. Would to God I could prove it to you! You have the blood in your veins of the liberator of this country.’

‘Whom they allowed to live thirty years above their seashore, poor, alone, forgotten! They scarcely knew that he was amongst them. Who buried him where the great dead lie? You; not they.’

‘Yes, it was they, not I, whom my father feared.’

‘Would your father admit that he feared them?’

‘I know not; I know that he did so.’

She was silent; she felt that she must seem to him thankless, callous, unworthy of all that he had done, and was ready to do; and her own heart trembled within her; she was afraid of it, afraid of its weakness, afraid of its betrayal of herself.

‘If I had any feeling for you,’ she said, with more passion than had been ever in her voice, ‘if—

what would it be? An insult to my race, a curse to myself. You? You and I? It would be sacrilege!’

‘Wherefore? Mutual love has healed the wounds of feuds before now in many a human history.’

‘It was not a feud. It was the betrayal of an Iscariot that which your forefather did to Platon Illyris.’

‘Perhaps, but it was not my sin.’

‘You cannot cleanse yourself from it. You may be called to ascend the throne to-morrow.’

‘And I would refuse the throne unless you shared it.’

‘I? My people would rise from their graves to strike me. How can you say such things to me?’

Some consciousness of the immense force of a great passion dawned on her; some sense that it was irresistible as a forest fire. She rose, and threw her veil about her head.

‘These are all useless words,’ she said to him. ‘Between you and me there is a great gulf fixed; it is as deep as the Hellespont, and I will drown in it like Helle.’

She entered the house, and his heart sank within him.

Othyris found the mare chafing restlessly at her inaction, and rode her at dangerous speed down the steep road back to Helios and through the Gate of Olives. He was in time to enter by the back courts of his palace, and regained his apartments seen by few of his household, and confident that of those few none were likely to be indiscreet enough to talk of his absence in those early morning hours. His life had



been erratic and adventurous ; his courtiers knew well that no quality in them was so favourably seen by him as that of discretion. They knew him too well to anger him by prying into his amorous secrets.

## CHAPTER XXIX

THE funeral of the late Crown Prince was a great spectacle, a military pageant of the first order ; only that of the King could have surpassed it. The body was placed upon a gun-carriage, like a dead god upon his altar, and the princes, his brothers, with a galaxy of foreign princes, their relations, followed it ; all of them in full uniform and mounted on splendid chargers. If the music played by the massed bands had not been so slow, so mournful, and so solemn, the procession might easily have been mistaken for a wedding march or a conqueror's entry. The population of the capital was in the streets, dumb, sullen, yet magnetised by the grandeur of the show. In no city of the world has the populace the courage to display its disapproval by shutting its shutters before a pageant.

At that same hour another man was being carried to his end ; carried a short journey from the mattress on which he had died to the dissecting table in the floor below in the great central hospital dedicated to St. Elizabeth. He had been a good man all his days, a worker in the docks ; he had reared a large family with honesty and kindness ; they had most of them emigrated at an age when they began to grow useful ; two only were now alive, labouring men in

the Western hemisphere ; he had been long ill and out of work ; he had suffered from tumour in the liver ; he had been promised a cure at the great hospital ; he had found only death. There was none to pay the fee which permits the removal of a body from the hospital ; his wife was weeping miserably outside the gates ; she could not buy the right to bury him ; his remains were laid on the dissecting table, and the instruments of the students searched his inmost parts, traced the net-work of his veins, scooped out his brain, sawed his spine in sections. The sounds of the military music, the passing of the troops, the boom of the funeral guns, rolled through the operating-room from an adjacent street.

The contrasts of life are too sharp, and its disparities are too great.

At ten o'clock on the day following the funeral Othyris went to his first interview with his father ; a meeting which both would have been equally willing to avoid had such avoidance been possible.

John of Gunderöde received him in the room in which he spent most of his indoor hours, surrounded by the modern substitutes for the thunderbolt of Zeus and the wand of Proteus. He was seated before his bureau on a revolving chair, and he wheeled round and faced his son, with a sign dismissing the attendant officials. His olive cheeks were pale and their flesh was flabby ; his eyes were sullen and restless ; in his teeth was the inevitable cigarette ; he had rarely known embarrassment, but he knew it then.

Othyris felt none. He was cold, resentful, paying

to the smallest iota all the deference demanded of him ; but to the King this extreme ceremony seemed irony, although any lack of it would have appeared to him offence.

John of Gunderöde had never felt impatience before ; but now he was totally powerless to undo this knot which fate had tied, to rid himself of the successor whom he hated, of the revolutionary whom he feared. Judging Othyris by himself, he opined that, now, being immediate heir to the throne, his son would cease to be a revolutionary, but would not for that reason cease to be a foe. He was convinced that Elim, impatient to reign, would use his popularity with the masses to dethrone himself.

The two men were in strong contrast. The King's stout and stunted figure filled his revolving writing-chair without grace, his eyebrows were drawn together in a gloomy gravity, his skin was yellower than before ; he had neglected to dye his hair, and patches of grey showed in it ; his teeth were shut, and scarcely unclosed for speech ; he looked like an adjutant, like a merchant, like the head of a department worried and incensed by matters offensive and odious which could not be altered or controlled.

His son stood before him in the full light from the windows, pale as the dead Adonis, fair as the Sun-god of the poets, tall, slender, calm, and cold ; with a great weariness upon him, but with no weakness ; a man who forgot nothing, and who, if he forgave, did so only because his own conception of duty made it incumbent on him.

His father understood that he himself had been in error in his estimate of one whom he had considered a visionary, an anarchist, a fool. He received an

impression of his own incapacity to dominate his successor which was new and odious to him.

Force at the present moment was out of the question. Persuasion had never been one of the methods of the monarch. What he required in the heir to the Crown was a copy of himself, acquiescence in all his own views and acts ; a will servilely copying his own will, and promising him for the future, when he should be no more, the continuation of his own influence, the development of his own projects and his own home and foreign policy.

To hope for this from Elim was to indulge in a baseless vision. There could be no continuity of action and opinion between him and a man who was in every way his opposite, who had no more similarity to his own absolutism than Vergniaud had to a Versailles. If he died that day and Elim reigned in his stead he knew all that he had done would be undone : that the Guthonic alliance would be broken, that the military dominance would be at an end, that the network of policies which he had been at such pains to weave would be swept away like a cobweb, that the whole future of absolutism which he had built up under the cover of constitutionalism would be pushed down like a child's sand castle. The country was ready to welcome such changes—setting aside its bureaucracy and some portion of its aristocracy. Of the existence of revolutionary feeling in the army itself he had been long aware. The rank and file were ready to throw down their arms at the first propitious moment.

His dead son could have been trusted never to allow that moment to arrive, but his actual heir would certainly hasten its advent. For the first

time in his reign his astute and obstinate mind found itself baffled. In such difficulties the rulers of large armies and disposers of large exchequers are able to launch their nation into some racial feud or flattering conquest, and in the ferment and wrath thus excited make their peoples forget their hatred of compulsory service and bend their backs under the knapsack. But Helianthus could not be thus launched into oblivion and war-fever. Her allies kept her immovable ; her finances were limited ; her power to move alone was small, almost nil ; in Europe her cannon would not be allowed to fire ; in savage and distant States she had renounced her share in that butchery which is called the crusade of civilisation. Candor, since she had become Imperia, did not allow her friends to stop a ball or hold a wicket in the great game she played in the Dark Continent. Now and then she called to a crew of a Helianthine battleship to come ashore and field for her on some barbaric coast or uncertain frontier ; but this was very rarely, and neither navy nor army of Helianthus dared move without her.

All these thoughts passed through the King's brain as he sat in that silence which was his constant refuge in any difficult moment.

In his successor he wanted a careful and exact continuance of his own work ; in Elim he could only see the destroyer of it.

The interview was ceremonious, strictly confined to that which the moment demanded, with a rigid limitation on both sides to what was necessary and politic. By neither was there spoken a single superfluous word ; between them there could not be either confidence or candour ; they were

enemies, and consanguinity only intensified antagonism.

The King felt less contempt for his son than before, but he felt also, more strongly, that between himself and Elim there could never be other than enmity of the most bitter kind. He had thought his second son a weak and dreamy enthusiast, but he recognised now that behind these ideals and phantasies which seemed so miserably absurd to himself, there was something of the iron of the Gunderöde temperament, as yet latent but existent, and likely to grow harder as youth passed. Whatever it might become, he knew that it would be inimical to himself, contrary to all his plans, his ambitions, his ruling power.

When he had intimated to Othyrus that in his present position it would be necessary to renounce the friendships and preferences which had been notably his choice hitherto, his son had briefly replied that he could not be unfaithful either to his friends or to his faiths; and the monarch had felt that he would have no power to make him so.

‘You must surely perceive the indecency of such sentiments in your changed position,’ he said with ill-restrained wrath.

‘I perceive, sire, the indecency of changing a principle merely because a situation has changed,’ replied Othyrus. ‘I hope that I shall never be guilty of it.’

‘The heir to the throne cannot be a revolutionist!’

‘I have led no revolution, sire.’

‘Because you were arrested in time to prevent your doing so.’

‘Your Majesty has been misinformed. I attended a funeral; I assisted in a reparation; I did no more.’

‘The military court judged otherwise.’

‘I cannot help its incorrect opinions. Your Majesty did not deign to question me yourself.’

‘I do not consider that my prerogative extends to interference with the sentences of military tribunals, especially where a member of my family is the offender. You had every facility given you for defence. If you did not avail yourself of such facilities the fault was yours. Your replies offended your judges, who certainly would have been better pleased if they could have acquitted you.’

‘They did their duty doubtless as they saw it. I trust your Majesty will believe that I also did mine as I saw it.’

‘There was no question of duty in your case. There were only insubordination and offence.’

‘I regret that your Majesty sees my conduct in that light.’

The King gave utterance to a short, harsh sound, half laugh, half curse.

‘If I order you now to return to Hydaspe and fulfil the remainder of your sentence?’

‘I go, sir, of course, instantly.’

His father’s half-shut, gloomy, penetrating eyes looked at him in inquisitive scepticism. He was strongly tempted to take his son at his word and send him back to the saline marshes of the east coast. But his inclinations never ran away with his judgment or his passions with his prudence. His sense of what was best for himself was always his guiding consideration. He knew how his Cabinet, his Senate, his Chamber, his people in general would view such an action.

‘That is impossible now,’ he said curtly. ‘I



regret that seclusion and solitude have not produced a greater change in your character and opinions. I hope that the great responsibilities which have devolved on you may produce more effect.'

With these words he intimated that the interview was over, and turning to his bureau put the acoustic tube to his ear.

There was a secret chamber which opened out of the King's study. It had been made when that portion of the Soleia had been builded by the Byzantine emperors. The gyration of the panel, which was movable, was undiscoverable by any one to whom the secret was unknown ; and it contained a hidden lock, of which the key had been handed down by Theodoric to his son, and by his son to his successor. An old monk of an Oriental monastery had given the secret and the key to Theodoric as price of the permission to his order to remain unmolested on their rocky eyrie on the northern mountains of Helianthus. Theodoric and the monk had long been dead, but the key had been transmitted to the reigning monarch ; and the barefooted, unwashed, famished anchorites still paced their stony corridors, and lighted their bronze lamps, and intoned their wild litanies, in the recesses of the Rhætian alps.

The sea-front of the Soleia stood directly on the quay, without any intervening wall or garden. The window of the secret chamber was concealed from without ; it was closed by a marble panel carved to correspond with the exterior carvings, and turned on a steel swivel of elaborate and ingenious workmanship. It was characteristic of the present King's carefulness

and prudence in all things great and small that he remembered to keep the mechanism in good order, and with his own hands oiled it twice or thrice a year, and moved it to prevent rust. The chamber within was square, small, lofty ; all of stone ; the signs of the Zodiac were sculptured on one of the walls ; when the narrow aperture was open, the person within looked on the great marble quay which separated the palace from the sea.

The key, which was very small, the King carried in a locket containing a miniature of his first wife, the bride of his boyhood. No one, not even her son, had ever asked him to open that locket ; every one knew that its original had been a homely, unlovely person, with the ruddy skin, the short-sighted eyes, the high cheekbones, the large teeth, of the Guthonic physiognomy. There were many portraits of her in the palaces and castles occupied by the Gunderöde, and their original had been lying for over thirty years under the lead and cedar and silver of her triple coffin, never remembered by her husband or her son, or by the people who had acclaimed her on her bridal.

According to the custom of his House the King had confided the fact of the existence of the retreat to the Crown Prince, so that it should be known by his successor in case of his own sudden death. But he had never shown the Crown Prince more than the key and the trick of the panel ; the less any one of his sons knew, the better ; he did not even exempt the devotion of Theo from that conclusion. It was also characteristic of him that in all the years during which he had been aware of the existence of this closet, no man or woman had ever heard of it from

him, or seen him enter or leave it. This was the strength of the King : he was sufficient to himself.

The secret had gone to the grave with Theo ; it should, by precedent, be passed on to the new Crown Prince ; the monarch was bound to have one living holder of the knowledge in case of his own sudden death by disease or assassination. But John of Gunderöde, as he stood in the dim cell-like chamber, said to himself that he would not part with that secret to his present heir ; it should sooner die with himself. Why not ? It was only a matter of personal security ; a refuge in case of personal danger ; it had no importance to the nation, or interest for the State ; it was as wholly his own property as the signet-ring on his finger. Elim should live and reign, if circumstance allowed, without that knowledge. There was so much that he was obliged to reveal to his heir ; to allow, to share, to confide, so sorely against his own will. This, at least, he could withhold. Some day, to have thus withheld it would perchance be useful.

This power of unswerving reticence was the King's great strength, a strength which made up for what was limited and ordinary in his intelligence. 'Keep your tongue behind your teeth,' says the Helianthine proverb, 'and you are master of men.'

Helianthus, he considered, would be too small a realm to hold both him and Elim. All unshared knowledge is power of a sort ; he kept what he had got.

He looked through the aperture out on to the scene beneath. The southern quay of the city was immediately below, with its marble walls and piers, its long graceful jetty running out into the blue

water, its basins where the royal craft of all kinds was anchored, the offing crowded by vessels of his own and other nations, lying at anchor ; some for defence, some for pleasure, most of them for trade.

The beauty of the scene was great ; the gleaming marbles, the hyacinth blue skies, the waters—here the colours of a dove's throat, there of a kingfisher's wings ; here green as an arum leaf, and there white as an arum flower—the heaven-pointing masts and the many-hued canvas of the shipping, and across the bay the peaks and slopes of the Mount Atys range, all made up a picture of radiant charm, charged with many august memories of the past. But the King was not a man to think of such things as these, or note their meaning. He looked as the surveyor, as the engineer, looks ; and in his trained soldier's eyes measured, studied, appraised.

A shot from that secret place, from a sure hand, noiseless and smokeless, would take certain death down into a crowd passing along the broad white paven quay. No, he thought, his son should not know of that chamber. He closed the aperture, and left the cell : the panel fell back into its place, its hinges hidden and its lines united under the carved wreaths of leaf and blossom. He was a practical man ; having decided that silence was the better part he kept silence, and dismissed the subject from his mind.

It was a very orderly mind ; it resembled a well-arranged medicine-chest ; every separate drug was labelled and ready for use, and if it contained some poisons it was only because poison is as necessary, and sometimes as useful, and even as healing, as is the sedative or the tonic. Above all, he was wise in this : he never left his medicine-chest unlocked.

The King had been greatly incensed by the demonstrations of joy at the return of Othyris. He considered that the city and the nation ought to be dumb and paralysed by woe. The loss of such a prince as Theo seemed to him only equalled in history by the death of Marcellus ; a not appropriate parallel. All his dominant and imperious temper was in revolt at the subjugation of his will by circumstances over which he had no control. He was accustomed to alter, to bend, to undo, to build up, the circumstances of his own life, and the lives of others, with success and without interference. He could ill stoop to receive the blows of an undesired fate, the opposition of an antagonistic character. Within his own realm he was supreme ; and the limitations enforced on him outside it were sufficient annoyance to his arrogant temper without internecine or family feud.

The mere casual germ of an ordinary disease had been enough to alter and reverse all his plans, his intentions, and his arbitrary will. Before it he had been as helpless as a pauper in a poorhouse. He felt rage rather than grief that he should be thus abased to the level of the ordinary sons of men.

One thought alone was prominent in his angry mind : Elim must never reign.



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## AUTUMN 1908

# The Last Novel of Ouida

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# Marion Crawford's New Novel

## THE DIVA'S RUBY

THIS volume concludes the trilogy of novels in all of which Margaret Donne, the queen of lyrical opera singers, is the heroine. Delightful as were *Soprano* and *The Primadonna*, *The Diva's Ruby* excels them in excitement and interest.

It opens with a chapter, the scene of which is "in the heart of the mountains near a remote little city of Central Asia," where is hidden a ruby mine. The secret road to this source of wealth is divulged by a Tartar maiden to the European traveller who has been staying in the town, and with whom she has fallen in love. He manages to secure a supply of the precious stones and makes off with them, leaving Baraka to get out of the terrible position in which her action has placed her as as best she can. In this way the glamour of the East is made to pervade the story, for the girl, dressed in male attire, follows her lover to Europe, and in her search for him she comes into contact with the Greek financier, Logotheti, to whom Margaret has engaged herself, and also with Van Torp the American millionaire, who, on hearing that the Primadonna was actually betrothed, had sold the great Nickel Trust (of which he had been the head) and had come to England with the fixed determination not only to prevent Margaret's marriage with Logotheti, but to marry her himself. The reader of *The Primadonna* is aware of the interesting personality of this character, and how the aversion with which his acquaintance is made changes to respect and liking. Margaret is moved in the same way, although in the first instance her feeling towards him had been nothing short of loathing and fear. Then, step by step, patiently, doggedly, and with great skill, Van Torp sets himself to rise in Margaret's good opinion. In this he succeeds, and as he ascends Logotheti falls. That this rival's overthrow is mainly owing to Van Torp goes without saying. Yet, with one exception, which after all was "only precious like low-down" as he himself expresses it, the American never acts dishonourably. In all his planning and scheming Baraka unconsciously acts as his good angel, for through her Logotheti so implicates himself that in anger and wounded vanity Margaret decides to break off her engagement with him. After this it is easy sailing for Van Torp, and the story ends with justice meted out to the man for whom Baraka has risked so much, and a happy straightening out of all tangles.

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# Miss Dougall's New Novel

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The scene is laid at the time of the last General Election. An old man from Canada, of fine spirit and broad sympathies, who has unexpectedly come into a fortune, desires to know whether his only relative, an English country vicar, would be a satisfactory heir; so he and his wife come to England, and settle down in the parish beside the vicar and his family and a typical set of village "society," keeping their wealth a secret. The vicar's wife dislikes these homely relatives, until she accidentally discovers that they are rich. The mental process by which she then persuades herself into trying to please them is described with subtle insight.

The other leading character in the book is Oriane Graham, a well-bred, well-educated woman. In early youth Oriane had been loved by a young Methodist minister, who, however, had been given to understand by the vicar that his love-making could not be acceptable to a Churchwoman, and had left the place. When the story begins he is a distinguished Oxford professor. Oriane had been, and still is, attached to him, but betrays it to no one. Their love-story runs through the book, but Miss Dougall, as is her wont, makes it no conventional one, and their lives continue to run apart.

The climax of the book is reached when Oriane, whose outlook has been much widened by friendship with the old man from Canada, reproaches the vicar with having blighted her life by interfering to keep her apart from the man she loved, also with keeping apart Christian people, who ought to be essentially one, by his harsh view of those outside the Church. There are other and varied characters in the book, in particular the artist who makes the worship of beauty and happiness his religion, and the Anglican bishop who, as a Churchman, represents the more saintly type of Christian seen also in the old Canadian.

# Miss Broughton's New Novel

## MAMMA

ADMIRERS of that old favourite, *Cometh Up as a Flower*, will find that in her new novel Miss Broughton has lost none of her old power to fascinate and charm. *Mamma* is a skilfully drawn character, and though from the beginning the reader is taken behind the scenes and shown the selfishness and vanity by which she is dominated, it is easily understood (so adroitly does this clever old lady work upon the divergent temperaments of her relatives) how it is that she is regarded by most of them as worthy of nothing but the highest esteem and most admiring devotion.

The story opens on her seventieth birthday when her three married daughters come from their respective homes to bring gifts and do homage. An event of this occasion is the conversation that centres round Mr. Hatton, "a young artist with a curious talent for catching a likeness," who has offered to paint Mamma's portrait. That he has asked her to sit to him "for nothing but his own pleasure" is the chief reason for Mamma's acceptance. On his first visit he explains to Lucia (the unmarried daughter who is privileged to devote her life to Mamma to such an extent that she even shares that lady's bedroom in order to be within easy call by night as well as by day) that she is no stranger to him as he has already heard much about her from a certain Tommy Carruthers to whom, fourteen years before, when Lucia was seventeen, she had been engaged for exactly four days.

From Hatton Lucia learns that Carruthers is "not doing well," and had gradually gone down hill till he had become a waiter in a hotel. There is worse behind, but Hatton, who is himself falling in love with Lucia, will not tell her this. The whole story then comes to the knowledge of Gwen Baskerville, a niece of Lucia, and a very up-to-date and advanced young woman, who is fired with the desire of bringing the at-one-time lovers together again. This, of course, she cannot do without Hatton's help. He enters reluctantly into the plot and Carruthers, who has unexpectedly inherited a fortune, is found, just as he is celebrating his wedding with the barmaid of his favourite tavern. Meanwhile Lucia has discovered that her feelings towards the artist, whose uncultured manners had at first disgusted her, have undermined the secret tenderness which she had always entertained for her old lover.

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# Miss Carey's New Novel

## THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE HILL

MISS CAREY'S new book will probably become one of the most popular of her stories, for it lacks none of the attraction that distinguishes the long list of well-known novels by the same author. Readers of every age, too, will find it interesting, for though it relates the love-stories of a brother and sister who are both under twenty-five, its dominant theme is the love-story of a lady who has lived very nearly half a century. Miss Brydon is the aunt of Harold and Maureen, a "love-spinster" as she calls herself, and the possessor of a picturesque old house surrounded by a beautiful garden in a little village near the Kentish coast. Her character is drawn with loving care, and is as fragrant and delightful as the flowers she tends with such assiduous activity.

At the opening of the story Aunt Margaret has not long inherited the house and a sufficient income to maintain it from an old lady with whom she lived as companion for several years. To her home she invites Maureen, a girl of nineteen, one of the many children of Miss Brydon's only brother. Maureen understands that the invitation is intended as a lasting one, and that if she goes to her aunt it is as an adopted daughter rather than as a mere visitor. She does not like parting from her brothers and sisters, but when she has once settled down in her new home she is happy enough.

Among the neighbours is the crippled owner of Marsh Hall, a Mr. Romney Chaytor, who in saving the life of his half-sister had met with the injury that had resulted in incurable lameness. He had made up his mind never to marry, but Miss Brydon succeeds in changing his ideas on the subject, though nobody is more surprised than herself that his choice of a wife should be her own niece, Maureen. Harold's love for Ruth Chaytor has finally also a satisfactory realisation. But Miss Brydon's story is too sacred and unusual to be told. It should be learnt at first hand, and on reaching the end the reader will be as admiring of the real heroine of the story as are any of her own little circle of relatives and friends. Not only in its title should *The Sunny Side of the Hill* prove an enjoyable companion.

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